

Pleasant Grove, how do you spell relief?

L.O.V.E

Locally Organized Volunteer Effort



***A Pictorial Record of the
Collective Relief Effort in
Pleasant Grove***

A few words from the Site Manager of L.O.V.E Ministry



April 27, 2011 started as anything but a normal day.

I was awakened about 5:00 am to a terrible storm and tornado sirens. Soon, phone calls poured in from clients and friends reporting the damage around Vestavia Hills and Cahaba Heights. By late that evening the world had changed for many people in multiple areas of our state. The next day my home church asked several available men to spy out the land in several areas of devastation. My

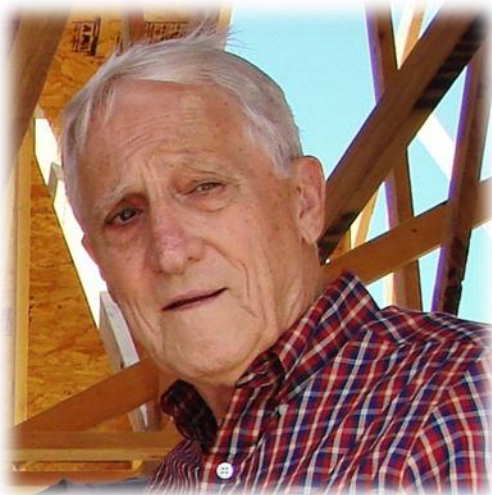
assignment was Pleasant Grove, AL.

Six weeks of debris removal later I began to pray for further direction. Several projects fell in our laps for folks uninsured or underinsured. The need was great, but the workers were few. (Sound familiar?) I began to pray with the pastor of the local P.C.A church and seek guidance from my home church leadership for help and direction. With their guidance, an interdenominational footprint for ministry was born.

The result of our prayers for Pleasant Grove is partially documented in this publication. Through this process, God provided materials, money, and an unimaginable opportunity for many to mature. We watched Him do what only He can do. Organizations and people rose to the occasion as God called and the Church responded.

This publication is dedicated to a short-term volunteer who served among us, and made maximum impact with minimum time. Trenton Ellison went home to be with the Lord after working with L.O.V.E for only a few months. His example, however, gives us a glimpse of the faithful in spite of the circumstances of life. He set the example of faithfulness and was engaged until the end. John 13 gives us a vivid picture of the servant leader. Verse 2 says, "He now showed them the full extent of His Love" and in John 13:15 Jesus says, (the only place in scripture) "I have set for you an example..." Trenton Ellison (a giant in the construction industry) walked this out daily as he "washed our feet" and set this example for us to follow.

As servants for God's Kingdom, may we also be as focused and diligent.





A Pastor's Perspective

David cries out to the Lord in Psalm 25, "Redeem Israel, O God, from all their troubles." As I made my way through parts of Pleasant Grove on the morning of April 28, 2011, I offered up that prayer, redeem Pleasant Grove, O God, from their troubles. But this was not your ordinary trouble. Over 250 homes were gone - missing except for some rubble that your mind refused to equate with the structure which had once stood in that place. Hundreds cried out for God to relieve the trouble, affliction, sadness, and for the great sense of loss and loneliness to be taken away. Many people cried out to God for their life to be restored to some semblance of normal, for things to be replaced, and mourned for that which could never be replaced.

At such times all our natural inclinations are wrong. We wonder if God cares about us or what we are experiencing. We wonder if God has utterly forgotten us and we are inclined to believe the lies of the world, the flesh, and the devil that encourage such inclinations and doubts. But God does care, He is full of mercy and compassion and He decrees and brings about through the most seemingly insignificant people and actions His marvelous provision and help in the midst of our troubles. And so it was on the morning of April 28th that God's People began to show up in Pleasant Grove and feed, clothe, and house the people who had lost so much. These people were from every denomination. They came from Birmingham and surrounding communities and eventually from all across America. God showed forth His care and compassion through His people. That outpouring of God's mercy and provision continued for years, not days, as the pages in this little book attest.

Our enemies-the world, the flesh, and the devil, are always ready to suggest to us that God has forgotten us when He does not manifest His mighty power and deliver us from events like those of April 27th but God has demonstrated through the sacrificial giving and service of His people that He has indeed remembered Pleasant Grove. As David says, "according to Your love remember me for You are good, O God." Praise be to God for He has done great things.

~ Reverend Jim Maples, Sr. Pastor

Pleasant Grove Presbyterian Church

Economic Impact

After a visit with a local pastor I came away with an economic view very different from my initial thoughts about Pleasant Grove. Prior to the storm there were approximately 300 families at this church and now some 75 families have moved to other geographic areas and are not moving back to Pleasant Grove. That 25% decrease in attendance directly affects giving units, but not the cost of the facilities and operations budget.

Similarly the city has some 200 empty lots where taxable housing once stood. This negatively affects street maintenance, sanitation, and other city provided services. The economic impact of the storm will be felt by this community for many years to come. Please continue to pray for Pleasant Grove, Alabama.

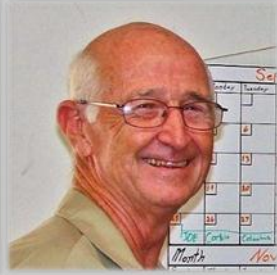
~ Gorden Thomason



The Volunteer Staff of L.O.V.E.



Gorden Thomason
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Team & Housing
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Field Supervision/
Office Assistant



Nathan Daniels
Community
Development

There is not enough room on these pages to say what motivated each of these folks. But, let it be said that God called this team together to show His love to others because His love was first shown through Christ's life and death (1 John 4:19 "We love because He first loved us"). While no one is seeking recognition, there are others we would like to mention. Many thanks to our Amish team coordinators. We also relied on support from our friends at United Methodist Committee on Relief, Christian Service Mission, Next Step Storm, local contractors, corporations and suppliers. Many volunteers gave of their time and resources to make this effort a success. Several churches throughout the area were serious about helping their neighbor. Many thanks to Pleasant Grove Presbyterian Church, Faith Free Methodist Church Pleasant Grove, Pleasant Grove United Methodist Church, First Baptist Church Pleasant Grove, Oak Mountain Presbyterian, Briarwood Presbyterian, Cahaba Park, Shades Valley Presbyterian, Altadena Presbyterian, Evangel Presbyterian, Clemson Presbyterian SC, M.N.A (Mission to North America) and many, many more.

These pictures will fade, but memories of that awful late afternoon in April will live on. The storm left a 3/4



mile wide path of destruction through Pleasant Grove, and caused grief for many. Lives were altered; some of



those who thought that insurance would provide were wrong. God has a heart for those who find themselves in



need. And He uses us, His children, to demonstrate His amazing love.



For several months God sent to us many, many works teams. Each group had its own story. There was the group



of college kids from Clemson SC. There was an Episcopal pastor with a crew from Houston TX who fell off of



the sawhorses. There were the friends of Curt and Sally that came down from up east even after their homes



were damaged by Hurricane Sandy. One group leader assured us that their youngsters would have plenty of



adult supervision, and yet???... Well they got **some** work done and went back with many memories.

One local group of older men bragged "We're not very good, but we are really slow!"



We wised up after the Amish girls told us that they could paint. The amount of paint on their persons was



greater than the amount on the walls. They were; however, highly effective in the kitchen!



A majority of our groups came as a result of the national effort of the United Methodist Committee on Relief.



Some of the complete projects



The Tale of Three Garages



1. Dan Stucky is a single dad who needed to have his garage built first because it houses his place of business. He repairs anything with a motor. His specifications were a tall overhead door and plenty of outlets.



2. Mary Freeburg is a widow who lost most of her home. She was in need of a garage, because her rebuilt home was smaller than before the storm, therefore she was in need of extra storage space. The story goes that although the garage was totaled, it protected some of the contents.



3. David Canant is a maintenance guy and handyman. One thing that we wanted to supply for him was a place to do his work. I do not think that you will ever find a car in his garage.

Our work was not limited to Pleasant Grove exclusively. We also made repairs in Concord, Hueytown, Pratt City, McDonalds Chapel, and north Birmingham. We could perform better if we did not get too far away from our base, but when duty called we would go. On January 2012, there was a storm that shook up the community of Oak Grove. We were there to put tarps on roofs and a house back on its foundation.



It has been an honor and a privilege to serve God these past 21 months in Pleasant Grove and the surrounding areas. "To God be the Glory!"

~ The L.O.V.E Staff