

MISSION MOMENT

Eldon, Missouri

On Wednesday, May 22 of 2019, an EF1 tornado went through the city of Eldon, Missouri. The storm brought winds of 104 miles-per-hour and tracked for 13 miles. Many homes were damaged, while others experienced power outages lasting several days. Many homes and apartments in the community had extensive damage, and the immediate future was uncertain.

At daybreak, Pastor Bill Foglesong of First Christian Church began checking on his members, neighbors, and of course, the church building. Thankfully, Eldon First Christian Church had no visible damage. The Eldon Ministerial Alliance gathered, prayed and began organizing to address the destruction in the community. The Eldon churches, along with many of the Eldon community service organizations, were united in caring for their neighbors and meeting immediate needs.

The local community center-- which was running on a generator--served as the primary shelter. Since they had power, many people came to the center for food, coffee, water and a warm place to rest. The two grocery stores in town were damaged, and sent all of their perishable food items to the shelter.

Leaders of Eldon First Christian Church and Serve Eldon community group, who were not affected by the storm gave their time to help. Some gathered donations of food and water, or organized the supplies that began flowing into the center. Others began cooking meals and coordinating volunteers. Together, this community became co-workers in rebuilding lives and investing in their shared future.

Pastor Foglesong's wife, Lisa shares her perspective:

Neither of us had been through any disaster before and it was mind numbing. With some of our people being affected and the whole town in disaster reaction mode, we didn't know what to do. Our Regional Minister, Rev. Paul

Koch called --he had seen Eldon on the news. When Paul asked how he could help, we were still stunned and had no immediate answer. Paul said he would contact Week of Compassion Executive Director, Vy Nguyen.

Moments later, Vy called and said simply: "what do you need?" Just a few days after, we received a check to assist our congregation members who had suffered damage from the storm.

Those two phone calls with offers of help and concern made all the difference when we were feeling overwhelmed. In those moments, we knew there was someone out there reaching out to us; and we knew that we could go to the community center and begin serving others too. The rest is history: the community came together, food came in, hot meals were made and served, and pastors and church members came in to help. People were cared for and comforted...

Knowing we were not alone and were supported by our wider Church was the breath we needed to answer the call of those in need around us. No more time for tears or shock -- work needed to be done.

We did not need a large amount of money, but those who received support from Week of compassion were surprised and grateful that the church was walking alongside them as they dealt with their own personal disasters. In that time of need, we served our neighbors as proud Disciples-- knowing the wider Church was behind us.

Thank you to the Week of Compassion and all who support this ministry. They were there for us in our time of crisis. We worked in this disaster with the feeling of support and love in our hearts from our church, which enabled us to serve in Christ's name.