

March 25, 2025

## Christmount - six months after Helene

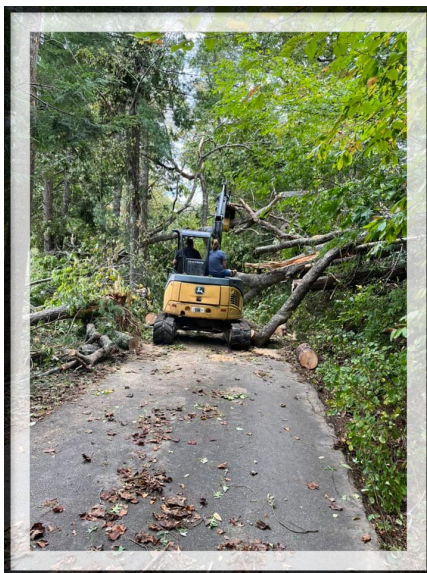
*"for all to discover community, acceptance, and purpose"*

In September 2024, Hurricane Helene swept upward from Florida's Big Bend, devastating communities throughout the southeastern United States. It hit the Blue Ridge particularly hard, triggering historic flooding throughout Western North Carolina.

At [Christmount](#), the national retreat center of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains is still marred by the scars of Hurricane Helene's devastation. The Christmount staff doesn't dwell on the damage wrought by the storm, though; there's just too much work to do. "It's definitely been a team effort," says Rev. Rob Morris, Christmount's Executive Director. "From boots on the ground to donations of chainsaws and checks, we have been making small steps forward each day."



*The hurricane caused massive landslides on Christmount's campus and surrounding residential areas.*

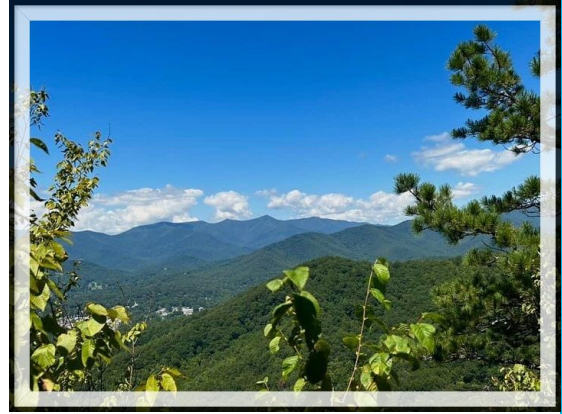


*Restoring road service was a major priority during the early days of recovery to ensure residents had access to water, food and medical services.*

Of the 225 confirmed fatalities from Hurricane Helene, 106 were in North Carolina, including 43 in Christmount's own Buncombe County. Mercifully, Christmount's staff and the residents of its 90 private homes were spared. The camp infrastructure wasn't so lucky. Christmount experienced massive damage to roads, power lines and water systems. Downed trees and flooding across the campus made conditions hazardous for weeks after the storm and affected hundreds of people.

For 75 years, Christmount, located in Black Mountain, North Carolina, has served the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as a sacred space and a campground for thousands of young people building their own relationship with God. For the past several decades, it has also served as the home of [Camp Lakey Gap](#), a unique residential camp designed for people on the autism spectrum. Throughout seven decades of changes, it has remained true to its mission as "a place for all to discover community, acceptance, and purpose."

In the midst of the destruction surrounding the area, Christmount's mission was front and center – looking outward to Black Mountain's devastated community, modeling servant leadership in the face of chaos. Drawing on the resources of this campground that has shaped thousands of lives over the last seven decades, and with support from Week of Compassion and other ministry partners, the campus opened its doors to the wider community to serve as a hub for locals in need of fresh water, food, supplies and reassurance in the days after the storm.



*The view from one of Christmount's scenic trails, many of which are still blocked by storm damage.*

In the immediate days after Hurricane Helene, Week of Compassion connected with Christmount staff to offer pastoral presence, community support grants, and solidarity grants and to coordinate with Disciples Church Extension Fund to support the repairs across the campus. Cleanup efforts were made harder by widespread infrastructure damage, which meant that the camp couldn't host large volunteer groups in the early days after the storm.



*Rev. Rob Morris, Christmount's Executive Director*

As soon as the winds calmed and the floodwaters receded, the community began the long road to recovery, and Week of Compassion staff joined Christmount staff in conversations with community leaders to explore long-term needs and recovery plans. Volunteers from churches across the denomination have helped Christmount's skilled maintenance team clean up creeks, clear trees, and rebuild bridges. "We have 25 churches and college groups signed up to help with Disaster Recovery Trips this year," shares Morris. "The response born out of care and compassion is truly a lifeline for us."

Week of Compassion is subsidizing registration fees for volunteers and will provide logistical support during the busy summer months, and additional [volunteer opportunities](#) will be opened as needs emerge. Groups will serve both at Christmount itself, and within the wider Black Mountain community.

The financial impact of the hurricane at Christmount cannot be overstated. Lost revenue from cancelled groups, the demand of costly repairs, and the interruption of a multiyear capital campaign to fund strategic improvements and an innovative new residence hall will have far-reaching impact.

Far from minimizing the importance of Christmount's work, the hurricane amplified it. As Rob Morris said, "The hurricane gave us a new perspective on the importance of offering lodging for emergency workers and volunteers as well as improving our ability to better care for the marginalized in our communities."

Six months after the hurricane, Christmount's staff still face a daunting task: to both repair the damage of the past and prepare for a brighter future. Week of Compassion remains committed to our Disciples colleagues and their work, and to the far-reaching efforts of

## VOLUNTEER

[WeekOfCompassion.org/volunteer](https://WeekOfCompassion.org/volunteer)

-  complete an interest form
-  explore dates & locations
-  become a site leader or virtual volunteer

*Learn about volunteering with Week of Compassion.*



long-term disaster recovery. In a world riven by conflict, Christmount's mission of community, acceptance, and purpose is more vital than ever.

*Our great thanks to Katie Rose, Christmount board member, for the primary story and photos.*

Find information about [volunteer opportunities](#) and [contribute to the Hurricane 2024 response](#) on the [Week of Compassion website](#).

Learn more about Christmount's ministry and mission [on their website](#).



Click the map for an [interactive view](#) of recent responses.



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MISSION : to work with partners to alleviate suffering throughout the world

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