

From: Andrew Burnett

Pastor: Covington & New Orleans, Louisiana; and Laurel, Mississippi

Dear Mr. Pinelli and the ministry,

On behalf of the New Orleans and Covington, Louisiana, and Laurel, Mississippi, congregations, I'd like to thank you for the flood of e-mails we have received from the ministry and membership offering to help in any way they can—be it housing, food, money or temporary jobs for displaced brethren. We've been inspired by everyone's eagerness to come to the aid of God's people.

On Saturday evening our family left our home in Slidell, Louisiana, and evacuated to Little Rock, Arkansas, where my wife Lisa's sister and her family reside. On Sunday, prior to Katrina making landfall, we began calling brethren in the New Orleans congregation as well as those in the Gulfport-Biloxi area who attend our Covington congregation. Thankfully, we only connected with answering machines which leads us to believe that most if not all of the brethren in New Orleans made it out.

Unfortunately, since power and phone lines are not operational, we're only now receiving bits of information from those who left. They've evacuated to places all over the southeast (Houston, Jackson, Atlanta, Birmingham) and some even to Cincinnati. One of our families in Houma, Louisiana, evacuated to a shelter in Houma, since one of them was not healthy enough to travel. We haven't heard from them, but we've since heard reports that some of the towns southwest of New Orleans have had power restored.

One of our members was called into work at one of New Orleans' hospitals and remained there through the hurricane. We're hopeful that she was able to evacuate.

Several of the brethren on the north shore (Slidell, Mandeville, Covington) decided to stay and ride it out. We've heard from nearly all of them that they're okay, even though many of their homes received damage. There are three members who live in the countryside just north of where Katrina made landfall in Mississippi that we have been unable to contact.

To date, we still haven't heard from about 65 of our members. Thankfully, we haven't heard of any injuries either. The damage in rural Mississippi and southeast Louisiana is extensive. Our members who are as much as 110 miles inland still are without power, and they've been told not to anticipate power returning for at least three weeks.

Please discourage brethren from attempting to come down to assist our brethren at this point. There is no power, no water, in most places no phone service, and just as importantly, no fuel. If brethren came down, there is a good chance they couldn't purchase fuel to get back out. We have been told by authorities not to return to our home in Slidell until it becomes safer.

At this point, our first objective is simply to locate all of our brethren to make sure everyone is okay. Mr. Ken Giese, from Houston, has been appointed by Mr. Kilough to act as "point man" to coordinate temporary housing for displaced brethren, and coordinate financial assistance and donations offered by the Church. So, presently at least, until we're in a position to get back to Slidell to assess our own housing situation we appreciate people contacting Mr. Giese if they're in a position to offer assistance in some manner.

Thank you for your continued prayers. We'll update you as we gain more information.

Best regards,
Andy & Lisa Burnett