We’re in for the Long Haul: Disaster Response in Virginia

On February 24, severe storms tore through the Commonwealth. Appomattox County was hit particularly hard; Central Baptist Church in the small community of Chap was one of nearly 45 homes and buildings that were either damaged or destroyed.

“I appreciate the association and what Virginia Baptists are doing to help,” said Nelson Mann, deacon chairman at Central. With much of the cleanup already done, he shared the church’s plan for recovery. “We’re going to bring in a triple-wide for services,” he said. “We’ve received dozens of offers for worship space from the community, but we belong here on this property.” Besides sustaining severe damage to the sanctuary and fellowship hall, many gravestones in the cemetery were knocked over. A local funeral home plans to come and fix them.

“In a disaster, you really find out who the good people are,” Mann said. He relayed a story how a man in Roanoke was watching the news and felt led to donate a sizable amount of money and food for the church.

Aaron Lee, Virginia Baptist Disaster Response Coordinator, agreed, relaying story after story about how Disaster Response teams weren’t needed in a number of places both in Tappahannock and
Appomattox because community members had taken care of their own.

Steve Collins, pastor of First Baptist Church, Nickelsville, and his crew of several men were hard at work, helping put a tarp on the roof of a house that was adjacent to the path of the tornado. “It’s just tragic to see all of this, but a joy to come help out,” Collins said.

Collins noted that if folks cannot do construction, there are still needs that can be met, including talking and building up relationships with homeowners.

In addition to serving in Appomattox, Virginia Baptists took the lead in recovery efforts in Tappahannock. Long-term efforts are currently getting underway. Officials from local, state, and federal agencies recently hosted a meeting to discuss next steps as these communities continue to recover.

“We’re in for the long haul,” Lee said.

Ministries like this one are made possible by the generous Cooperative Missions gifts of Virginia Baptist churches affiliated with the Baptist General Association of Virginia. Read more Kingdom Stories at BGAV.org/blog.

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