

Even though we know we are called to “love our neighbors as ourselves,” sometimes it is difficult to know how to reach out and where to go. As a part of our *Embrace Neighbors* new ministry initiative, CBFNC is focusing on equipping and connecting Cooperative Baptists for service opportunities across our state and beyond. The devastation caused by Hurricane Matthew inspired many of our partner churches to contact CBFNC for opportunities to help.

Pastor Andy Jung and a few of the members of First, Albemarle, saw the opportunity to help their brothers and sisters in Christ in eastern North Carolina. They joined the cleanup efforts in Lumberton that were led by CBFNC ministry partner, Baptists on Mission.

Their first day’s assignment, removal of duct work from underneath a house, was a big task for a team of unskilled volunteers. According to Andy, the homeowners said they had helped others many times but now were unable to do for themselves. Andy said he wanted them to know that “we are all together in the body of Christ, lifting one another up and helping meet each other’s needs. This time they were the recipients and maybe next time they will be the ones giving.”

The devastation Andy saw “did not discriminate between classes, races, or location. The flood hit everyone no matter who they were. So many of them did not have flood insurance and are completely left with nothing.” The team’s goal was twofold: to help clean up and to help restore hope.

At their second work location, the team found an elderly couple who had lost nearly everything. Andy greeted the couple, who said, “We had begun to lose hope. We did not know where to go or what to do. Seeing your face helps us know that God is with us and that things are going to be ok.”

As churches like First, Albemarle, looked for ways to help, CBFNC was able to connect churches and individuals with ministry partners and local churches working to make an impact in their communities. With the leadership of Linda Jones, CBFNC Missions Coordinator, local church leaders connected with CBF Global, Baptists on Mission, and other CBFNC ministry partners

to aid in the long-term recovery of these communities. “The cleanup and recovery efforts are not going to be easy. We face a long process,” said Lisa Rust, CBFNC Moderator and member of First, Lumberton.

In order to best accommodate the recovery efforts, CBFNC established the NC Matthew Response Fund. Donations received through this fund are distributed through a grant process. CBFNC churches can apply for ministry grants to help their neighbors.

First, Lumberton, was among the first recipients. The church initially used their grant to purchase gift cards which enabled flood victims to buy necessities. Efforts then focused on

finding housing, making repairs, and moving families back home.

Along with these community recovery efforts, church leaders and volunteers are caring for their own church members affected by the flooding. Several of them lost everything. For one church member’s home, the first step was a complete electrical overhaul. “With the help of an NC Matthew Response Fund grant, we were glad to help her move forward in the recovery process,” said Lisa.

As ongoing recovery efforts continue, CBFNC partner churches remain faithful to their mission to reach beyond their walls to show the love of Christ to their communities and throughout the state.

If your congregation is interested in applying for a grant, visit [www.cbfnc.org/MatthewResponse](http://www.cbfnc.org/MatthewResponse). To support the ongoing ministry of CBFNC, visit [www.cbfnc.org/give](http://www.cbfnc.org/give).

