

Church Leaders, Make Houston Your Next Mission Trip

I have grown weary of the “once-in-a-thousand-year flood” description of the historical flooding Houston and surrounding areas have experienced this week.

This event defied all odds and all logic; it has become the new reality for myself and other Houston residents. However, do not feel sorry for us.

Though our skies are still cloudy and threatening as I write this column, we are basking in the glow of living in a city with great love and a huge heart.

Have you ever heard the statement, “Everything in Texas is bigger?” That is true. Our storms are huge. Keep watching: You will see that our recovery will be even larger.

I teach in a public high school. My school is predominantly African-American or Hispanic. They share their stories of the racism that they face each and every day.

You will never hear me refer to them by race. They are simply “my babies.”

I do not want to present Houston as a panacea when it comes to race relations, but this week, we have seen the very best of what this great city has to offer. You have seen the images of black officers carrying Vietnamese babies to safety. You have seen Anglo families taking in Hispanic neighbors.

My wife and I took refuge at Copperfield Church on Monday night as the rain-swollen street in back of our house finally receded. There was no check for political identification or religious persuasion. They just took us all in and fed us and gave us a safe, warm place to stay.

Their generosity was overwhelming. It made me think of Matthew 25 where Jesus says, “You saw me naked and you clothed me.” This great church lived the gospel

last night.

I want to issue church leaders a challenge. This year, plan your mission trip to Houston.

Sure, our mosquitoes might look like small birds, and the heat might make your local sauna blush in embarrassment, but we have a lot to offer.

Your members could eat in a Vietnamese restaurant whose menus have no English, but do include great pictures of their phenomenal cuisine.

You could worship on Sundays in a language that is not your own. You could take a foreign mission trip without ever leaving America. We are an international city.

Here is another thing we have to offer. A friend from another state said, "I wish I could come to Houston and encourage you guys."

As I told him, "Come to Houston, and we will encourage you. Come and we can show you how people come together and love each other in ways that defy description."

Some have already come. Texas Baptist Men are here. The Cajun Navy showed up with boats and volunteers.

We took in people during Katrina, and now they are returning the favor even though their own state has flooded recently.

I have friends from Crockett, Texas, who are sending boats. Friends from Longview, Texas, are sending food, clothes and supplies.

Why do I present this request now?

I know that churches will be making budget plans for next year. Mission committees are making plans for next summer. We would like to be in your budgets and on your mission calendars for next year. By then, we will better know what we need.

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This recovery will not be measured in days or weeks, but in months and years.

There are churches that have taken on water. Most have missed one Sunday and will likely miss a couple more.

Can you imagine not having offerings for three weeks? To be sure, there will be some good members who will send in their checks, but remember, many of these members have had catastrophic losses and cannot give what they wish. The effects will be financially devastating.

If you think my request is bold, please remember that Paul showed us the model. He took offerings in new churches in Asia Minor to help the church at Jerusalem.

It helped the saints in Jerusalem greatly. It also blessed the churches in Philippi and Ephesus. The need in Jerusalem was real. The huge spiritual benefit was unity in the early church.

I cannot find you places to stay or feed your groups, but this I can do: I will put you in touch with churches with needs.

I have friends (and Baptist Center for Ethics / EthicsDaily.com board members) in the Baptist General Convention of Texas and the Union Baptist Association whose offices flooded.

I will personally put you in touch with these people when we have a better sense of their needs. I have contacts with the Methodist churches in my area as well.


My mother-in-law is Catholic. There are pictures on her congregation's [Facebook page](#) that show the interior of their building underwater.

Consider helping churches that are not of your faith background. They won't turn you down.

My wife works with West Houston Assistance Ministries if you would like to work with their food pantry or care ministry. My email address can be found below.

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When I was a pastor, I would tell my members this: “We don’t go on mission trips to change people, we go on mission trips to be changed.”

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