

TODAY AT TLC

TLC Hurricane Aftermath Update 2

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Psalm 46:1-3

Just a quick note on how things stand with the church building. The water around the building has receded and we have been able to get to and enter it. The scene is not great, but not as bad as it could have been. Our main issue was about 8 inches of rainwater that was able to enter. Here's an example of just how powerful Ian's winds were, as a sheet of corrugated steel stationed over the office door was peeled back.



Inside there are still many wet spots on the floors, and the ceiling tiles are wet. Apparently, rain water leaked through the old drive through window. The organ looks okay, but the speakers behind the altar curtain may have been ruined. The altar area is a mess. We'll be gathering a team of whomever is available to begin the clean-up and salvage process this morning, at 11:00am.



Outside, there are trees and limbs down, and debris all over the place. We have some soffit damage, but the roof appears to have weathered the storm very well. Across the street, Bobby and his new bride are now homeless. We'll be looking to how we, their neighbor, can help them out and provide for their needs.

We will be gathering outside the church tomorrow for worship, one service at 9:30am. We'll haul chairs and hymnals out to accommodate the congregation and meet with Jesus in Word and Sacrament. We won't have an organ or a keyboard, but we're Lutherans! We're gonna sing anyway...hymns that we all know well.

The life of this church is going to be very different in the coming weeks and months. Our regular schedule will be very irregular. One thing that will not change is Jesus. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever. I can definitely see the hand of God's mercy and grace already in the aftermath of this catastrophic storm. Everyone that I could make contact with yesterday is safe and unharmed. Yes, we have damage, but lots of help is on the way. A group from the Lutheran Emergency Response Team (LERT) will be visiting TLC tomorrow to assess

our needs, then they will mobilize volunteers from around our district and synod to come and assist us in recovery, both at the church and at the homes of those of us who have significant damage. I don't know about you, but we could sure use more hands at our house just to clean up the debris and start the tear out process before rebuilding can take place.

Consider the weather, that's what's behind all this, but since the storm passed, and the rain and high winds subsided, the weather has been absolutely beautiful...cooler temperatures, especially at night, lower humidity, nice breezes, and not a drop of additional rain. It appears that there will be little or no rain all week long! Think that's a coincidence? "God is good, all the time...All the time, God is good!"

The Psalm quoted above should be our rallying cry as we move forward. "*God IS our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, WE WILL NOT FEAR!*" The central message is that we can rest and be reassured in the Lord, the almighty God who created and sustains the entire universe. The psalmist states, He is "*a very present help in trouble*". That means God is with us constantly, and not only that, HE'S HERE TO HELP! He helps in miraculous, unexpected ways, and He helps through other people, His people. With Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we will never walk alone. We'll be lifted up in His almighty hand and protected from anything that can harm or hinder our eternal future. By His power, we will rise up and defeat our circumstances, and the schemes that our enemy, the devil, uses in these circumstances to derail and weaken our witness to Jesus before others.

Yes, the waters roared and foamed, and even the mountains trembled before them, but Jesus is the one who calms storms, the storms in our weather, and especially the storms in our hearts!