



Ministry Overview

I. Background

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) opened a Billy Graham Prayer Center in New York City to pray for the people of the city and minister to those on the streets suffering with grief and pain.

II. The Need

During the 9-11 experience, it became apparent that many churches were ready to respond to the physical needs of people, but very few knew how to talk and engage appropriately with those who were in shock and grieving. Therefore, in appreciation of the immediate and long term emotional and spiritual needs of the city, and at the request of churches, the BGEA developed a biblically based Grief and Trauma training seminar. The purpose of this one-day seminar was to teach about grief, pain and suffering, and how to appropriately listen and share God's hope and comfort with those affected by this crisis.

III. Resolution

Soon after the training started, it became clear there was a greater need to start a Billy Graham Rapid Response Team to train and deploy specially trained chaplains in crisis intervention following man-made and natural disasters nationwide – and now the world. The Rapid Response Team training also provides support and the much needed help to equip God's people for ministry everyday when co-workers, friends and neighbors are impacted by a personal tragedy or crisis.

To meet the critical need for emotional and spiritual care following disasters, the Rapid Response Team currently has chaplains in the United States, the US Territory of Puerto Rico, Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom. These approved volunteer chaplains are carefully selected and prepared to demonstrate the compassion of Jesus Christ, and appropriately share God's hope through the One who "heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds", Psalm 147:3.

With the BGEA-RRT headquarters in Charlotte, North Carolina, the RRT has three international offices, and has responded to disasters in Australia, Brazil, British West Indies, Canada, England, Grenada, Haiti, Italy, Japan, Kenya and Myanmar.

"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, the harvest is truly plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest field."

Matthew 9:36-38 NKJV



Deployment History By Date

2002	Lafayette, Louisiana - Hurricane		Friendswood, TX – Hurricane
2003	Warwick, RI - Fire		Sante Fe, TX – Hurricane
	San Diego, CA - Fires		Beaumont, TX - Hurricane
2004	Punta Gorda, Florida - Hurricane		Galveston, TX - Hurricane
	Port Charlotte, FL - Hurricane		Grand Turk Island, BWI - Hurricane
	Arcadia, FL - Hurricane		Yorba Linda, CA - Fires
	Orange Beach, AL- Hurricane		Kenya, Africa – Civil Unrest
	Gulf Shores, AL - Hurricane	2009	Santa Catarina, Brazil - Floods
2005	Red Lake Indian Reservation, MN -Shooting		Poplar Bluffs, MO – Ice Storm
	Grenada, West Indies - Hurricane		Melbourne, Australia – Fires
	Mobile, AL - Hurricane		Madisonville, KY – Ice Storm
	New Orleans, LA - Hurricane		Lone Grove, OK – Tornado
	Baton Rouge, LA - Hurricane		Paducah, KY – Ice Storm
	Shreveport, LA - Hurricane		Maryville, IL – Church Shooting
	Lafayette, LA - Hurricane		Oakland, CA – Police Shooting
	St. Charles, LA - Hurricane		Carthage, NC - Shooting
	Biloxi, MS - Hurricane		Linton (Fargo), ND – Flooding
	Kiln, MS - Hurricane		Binghamton, NY – Shooting
	Gulfport, MS - Hurricane		North Central Texas – Wildfires
	Port Sulfur, LA - Hurricane		Mena, AR – Tornado
	Gretna, LA - Hurricane		L’Aquila, Italy – Earthquake
	Chalmette, LA - Hurricane		Fredericktown, MO – Inland Hurricane
	Houston, TX - Hurricane		Moravian Falls, NC – Flood
	Groves, TX - Hurricane		Holly Hills, FL – Flood
	Ft. Lauderdale, FL – Hurricane		Kings Mountain, NC – Tornado
2006	Binghamton, NY - Floods		Louisville, KY – Flooding
2007	Americus, GA - Tornado		Dallas, GA – Flooding
	Enterprise, AL - Tornado		Woodstock, GA – Flooding
	Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA - Shooting	2010	Boone, NC – Ice/Snow Storm
	Greensburg, KS – Tornado		Haiti – Earthquake
	Coffeyville, KS - Floods		Montcoal, WV – Mine Explosion
	Independence, KS - Floods		West Warwick, RI – Flooding
	Minneapolis, MN – Bridge Collapse		Albertville, AL - Tornado
	Rushford, MN - Floods		Yazoo, MS – Tornado
	Crandon, WI - Shooting		Nashville, TN – Flooding
	Rancho Bernardo, CA - Fires		Brentwood, TN - Flooding
	Rancho Santa Fe, CA - Fires		Whitehaven, UK – Shooting
	Madera, CA - Fires		Leamington, ON, Canada – Tornado
	Fallbrook, CA - Fires		Medicine Hat, AB, Canada – Flooding
	Arvada, CO - Shooting		Newfoundland, Canada – Flooding
2008	Jackson, TN – Tornado		Windsor, NC – Flooding
	Clinton, AR – Tornado		Lincolnton, NC – Tornado
	Lafayette, TN – Tornado		Elizabeth City, NC – Shooting
	Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL-Shooting	2011	Haiti – Earthquake (continued from 1/2010)
	Piedmont, MO - Floods		Tucson, AZ – Shooting
	Delta, MO - Floods		Wayne, NJ – Floods
	Suffolk, VA - Tornado		Ararat, NC – Tornado
	Greers Ferry, AR – Tornado		Pulaski, VA – Tornado
	Picher, OK - Tornado		Japan – Earthquake/Tsunami
	Joplin, MO - Tornado		Windsor, NC – Tornado
	Macon, GA - Tornado		Fayetteville, NC – Tornado
	Yangon, Myanmar – Cyclone		Raleigh, NC – Tornado
	Parkersburg, IA - Tornado		Birmingham, AL – Tornado
	Hugo, MN - Floods		Tuscaloosa, AL – Tornado
	Terre Haute, IN – Floods		Joplin, MO – Tornado
	Baraboo, WI – Floods		Japan – Earthquake, Tsunami
	Cedar Falls, IA – Floods		Minot, ND – Flooding
	Cedar Rapids, IA – Floods		Crooked Creek, AK – Flooding
	Columbus, IN – Floods		New Bern, NC – Hurricane
	Baton Rouge, LA – Hurricane		Wayne, NJ – Hurricane
	Donaldsonville, LA – Hurricane		Rutland, VT - Hurricane
	New Orleans, LA – Hurricane		Austin, TX – Fires
	Chalmette, LA – Hurricane		Binghamton, NY – Hurricane
	Port Arthur, TX - Hurricane		York County, SC - Tornado



Training

I. Training Goals

- a. Train and recruit chaplains for deployment with the Rapid Response Team
- b. Equip God's people to appropriately share His hope and comfort with people everyday who experience a personal crisis
- c. Help churches develop Disaster Preparedness Plans

II. Training Events

- a. Sharing Hope in Crisis (Regional 1-day seminar)
 - Mission to Respond
 - Suffering and Trauma
 - Message of Hope
 - Message to Share
 - Communication to a Diverse Community
 - Messenger to Serve

- b. Rapid Response Team Chaplain Conference (National 4-day conference)
 - Keynote Speakers
 - Panel Discussions
 - Testimonies
 - Critical Incident Stress Management Courses (CISM) Training



Testimonies

Below are a few quotes to illustrate the valued need and opportunity to provide Billy Graham Rapid Response Team Chaplains when disaster strikes.

"You don't have to have a disaster or personal crisis to use the training. You can meet others' emotional and spiritual needs wherever you are."

Connie Erpelding, Cedar Falls, Iowa

"I don't know where you can get any better training that incorporates such a love of God and knowing what we know - that God is the One that can change lives."

Jim Mitchell, Mount Hope, West Virginia

"Several medical staff commented that having the RRT chaplains made a difference in their personal attitude while they served. Some have even said they could not have completed their week of service without the chaplains' support due to the emotional trauma while working in the cholera clinics."

Medical Worker in Haiti

"It was such a blessing for the RRT chaplains to come alongside us. They are compassionate helpers. The more we are aware of the extent of this disaster, the more plainly we are aware of God's grace expressed through these men and women who helped us in our time of need."

Pastor, Yazoo City, Mississippi

"Following the Virginia Tech shootings, I was given comfort and direction for dealing with my loss from the Billy Graham Rapid Response Team. They came to me to comfort me and lift me up, and they performed those duties with great professionalism."

Neal Turner, Virginia Emergency Services Coordinator, Blacksburg, VA

"The Billy Graham Chaplains have made such a difference here at the shelter. It's great to see them praying with someone because I know they are really being helped."

Red Cross Shelter Manager, Shreveport, LA

"If it wasn't for the 'Blue Shirts' I wouldn't be here. I wouldn't have made it after the storm."

Deputy Greg Hauck, St. Bernard's Sheriff's Department, Chalmette, LA

"I can't begin to tell you how much I appreciate the BGEA chaplains. They have really been a godsend. The Care and Comfort Center concept has worked out great here. The students know what the 'blue shirts' are about and there is a level of trust that is great. Again, words can't express how much we appreciate the BGEA chaplains."

Paul Deschenes, Psy. D., Director of Counseling Services, Union University