

There will be another Zoom opportunity to connect for the adult class at 9:30 am. The discussion is based on the article below. This year the town of Lake Charles faced two twin hurricanes--a catastrophe on top of another catastrophe. The city is now in rebuild mode. The year 2020 could also be seen as a year filled with catastrophe. What should we do? How does God's Word give us hope and challenge us in times like these? To give you a heads up.....I'll be referencing Nehemiah 2, Isaiah 61 and Ezekiel 36:8-12.

Town Struggles to Find Motivation to Rebuild After Twin Hurricanes

Welcome

Egypt – Tent – Temple

In the News

Kathryn Shea Duncan, whose job it is to promote Lake Charles, Louisiana, loved going to work every day. Her working-class town had a lot going for it. Then the Covid-19 outbreak last winter interrupted many of the recreational and educational activities in the region.

August 27, Hurricane Laura, a category 4 storm, slammed the community, displacing more than 6,000 of the town's 80,000 residents and causing an estimated \$14 billion in damages. Thousands were without power for weeks. Just as some were beginning to make progress with repairs, Hurricane Delta made landfall October 9, causing another \$2 billion in damages.

Some churches, businesses and homeowners had replaced damaged roofs blown off by Laura only to lose the new roofs to Delta. Duncan, 24, began to wonder what was left of her community that she could publicize.

"The reality is, what product do we have to pitch?" she said. "What event? What's open? ... You start thinking, what does your job look like?" Duncan said. "What is everything that I do for a living, promote for a living, going to look like?"

"The whole country's burdened right now with politics and Covid and all the uncertainties about the economy. And on top of all that, these folks get hit, and then hit again," said Kyle Kelley, coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Louisiana.

The hurricanes couldn't have come at a worse time for election officials, who had to move nearly 70 percent of 123 voting precincts in the Lake Charles area to other locations for the presidential election due to problems related to the storms.

"This is going to go down as one of the most challenging elections in our history," Lynn Jones, the Calcasieu Parish Clerk of Court, said. "It was a one, two, three punch. The second we were done making modifications for Covid, Laura hits, and then comes Delta."

Danny Bartie Jr., whose diner was damaged during the storms, said, "For a lot of [the residents], voting is the last thing on their mind. They are dealing with so much else. A lot of people can't get to the polls, they don't have vehicles or they have been displaced."

The National Baptist Convention of America president, Samuel Tolbert Jr., who also pastors Greater St. Mary Missionary Baptist Church in Lake Charles, said, "The actual recovery -- putting things back together -- is almost at a standstill. People are waiting for insurance, or assurance from God, on what steps to take next."

Duncan, along with many Lake Charles residents, was discouraged, frustrated and angry that they couldn't seem to catch a break. She was really tempted by the thought of moving away.

But as she saw neighbors pulling together to make the best of a horrible situation, and checking on each other even as they struggled with the chaos in their own lives, Duncan pivoted to her default optimism.

"We can make it better," she said. "Through economic development and improving our infrastructure, and having a cleaner environment, and better transportation. You can't do all of those big things if you don't stay and work at it day by day."

Somehow, she thought that if she did move to a big city, her contributions would probably get lost in the shuffle.

"But if I stay here," the public relations coordinator said, "I can make a difference."

The chance to make a difference motivated a team of 26 people from HillSpring Church in Sand Springs, Oklahoma, to join a relief mission to Lake Charles, to aid in the recovery effort. Half of the team were teenagers.

"Our goal and our hope is that students would make a difference, not just in their neighborhood, but the world around them" said Associate Pastor Matt Barnett. "They went out and really saw the world outside of themselves, saw the devastation, saw pain, saw hopelessness, and they got to bring just a little bit of hope to each of these families."

Jacob Dennis, one of the volunteers, remarked, "It was just good to go out and help them -- bring a little light into their world in a dark time."

While Lake Charles had suffered many losses, Duncan said, "There's sort of this unfortunate beauty that might come from this. ... maybe [the people of Lake Charles] have an opportunity to reinvent themselves."

"By staying, I'm constantly challenging myself," the young woman noted. "It's that constant, daily challenge of thinking, what can I do better? How can I make this place better? How can I leave it better for the next generation?"

And besides, Duncan commented, "If I leave, then who is going to stay? Who is going to be that person?"

More on this story can be found at these links:

[How Do You Advertise a Town Ravaged by Hurricanes? *The New York Times*](#)
[In Lake Charles: Help Needed After Two Hurricanes in Six Weeks. *Baptist News*](#)
['One, Two, Three Punch': Back-to-back Hurricanes and Covid-19 Complicate Voting in Lake Charles. *Tennessean*](#)
[After Two Devastating Hurricanes, Southwest Louisiana Worries the Rest of the Country Has Already Moved On. *Scalawag Magazine*](#)
[HillSpring Church Provides Hurricane Relief in Lake Charles, Louisiana. *Sandite Pride News*](#)

Applying the News Story

The struggle of the people in Lake Charles, Louisiana, may serve as a microcosm for our nation and our world in the year 2020. Just when we think things couldn't possibly get any worse, another catastrophe happens!

We note that as this lesson was in development, a similar tragedy was unfolding as never before in Nicaragua. Two hurricanes, Eta and Iota, one a Category 4, the next a Category 5, struck two weeks and 16 miles apart, in a region far less equipped than our own to deal with them and to recover.

TWW team member Jim Berger observed: "This has never happened before, in two nations, two months apart! But the second time it's not America, so it's not our concern? Many faith-based disaster relief agencies are trying to respond, but all are stretched to the limit, especially during the pandemic. Every year churches send mission teams to Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala. Are we ready to send those same volunteers into post-apocalyptic disasters?"

Where can we find hope and motivation in times like these? We look to our faith for answers.

The Big Questions

1. When, if ever, have you been tempted to "move away" from the life you were living? What stresses and pressures contributed to your feelings of frustration with the way things were?

2. When, if ever, have you attempted to repair what was broken in your life, only to have those repairs destroyed by another "storm"? How did you react?

Bible references - Nehemiah 2, Isaiah 61 and Ezekiel 36:8-12.

3. Where do you turn when you can't seem to make any significant progress dealing with recalcitrant, stubborn problems?

4. Who or what has made a difference in your life when you needed encouragement? How did that person or thing renew your hope?

5. How can our faith help us discover or create "unfortunate beauty" from devastation and loss?

Update on Philomath

Closing Prayer