



A GATHERING PLACE  
FOR SHORT-TERM MISSION ARTICLES,  
RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

## **A Solid Foundation Amid Shifting Sands**

*By Mike Rhoades, Director of USA Operations & Marketing at Praying Pelicans Missions*

Chaos. Fear. Hardship. When a natural disaster hits, for many, the world literally turns upside down. It's hard for those unaffected to truly grasp the unsettling power of a natural disaster. The stark and instant realization that there is something much larger than yourself, mercilessly wreaking havoc on your life, will leave you forever changed.

“And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.” -- Matthew 7:27

As with the parable of the wise and foolish builders in Matthew 7:24-27, we often build our lives around things that seem so sure. Yet, the instant something shakes that foundation, our whole perspectives changes.

In 2010, our organization, Praying Pelican Missions (PPM) was not yet serving in Haiti. Then the earthquake hit; a magnitude 7 that left 1.5 million Haitians homeless and over half a million injured or dead. Seven years later two hurricanes, Irma and Maria, hit the island of Puerto Rico back to back. Millions of people were displaced, thousands dead and the entire island was out of power for months. In 2018, tropical storm Florence made landfall in the Carolinas causing mass flooding and displacing thousands who had only just finished recovery from a hurricane several years earlier. As an organization, as Christ-followers, there was no question that PPM would respond; the more challenging question was how.

In our experience with natural disasters, we are finding that there is a need for two waves of response.

### **PHASE 1 -- RELIEF**

Natural disasters often get front page news coverage. If the disaster is on a large enough scale the coverage may last several weeks. This is a good thing. News organizations perform an important work of informing the general public. As a result,

quick response organizations are able to deliver almost immediate and often lifesaving aide to the affected regions. They mobilize thousands of people and oftentimes millions of dollars in relief that provides medicine, shelter, food, and other aide that is a lifeline in the midst of a life altering event. **Immediately after a crisis, we don't worry about handouts—just that they get what they need!** This is often called “relief.”

## **PHASE 2 -- RECOVERY**

The second wave of support is in the form of long-term recovery that can last months or even years after the disaster strikes. **The Church can play a vital role in restoring a community physically and spiritually—this is often called “recovery.”** Long after the initial wave of disaster relief moves on, the local church can be a solid foundation amid the shifting sands of a natural disaster.

In 2019, Praying Pelican Missions will mobilize over 14,000 short term missionaries. A number of these missionaries will be working in support of disaster recovery efforts. As a short-term missions organization, PPM is focused specifically on supporting the local church by working alongside churches in disaster areas to provide people with the opportunity to be part of the second wave of disaster relief.

How will God lead you to respond after the next natural disaster? Whether it's praying for those who have experienced tragedy, giving to those who can provide immediate relief, or going to work with a partner helping others recover—you can have a significant impact.



Mike Rhoades is a husband, a father of two and a lover of great coffee. He has been serving with Praying Pelican Missions for 5 years and was previously the Associate Pastor of Youth and Young Adults at Grace Chapel Community Church. It is his life's mission to see people reach their full potential for the Glory of God.

More info: [www.prayingpelicanmissions.org](http://www.prayingpelicanmissions.org)