

# Rebuilding Hope

Story by Tom Price  
Photos by David Ducane, unless otherwise noted

“This is truly a miracle!” Eleanor Wilson exclaimed as she viewed her refurbished residence. The 88-year-old widow from Union Beach, NJ, never thought that she would again enjoy the home where she had spent a lifetime. Hurricane Sandy had pushed three feet of marshy water inside, rendering her house unlivable. But teams from Calvary Chapel Relief (CCR) had transformed it. Soiled carpets and drywall had been thrown away, mold removed, new drywall constructed, flooring put in, and cabinets secured. Eleanor’s greatest joy occurred when a team from CC Costa Mesa, CA, cleaned off and reinstalled her fence. Her son Michael, who died of cancer last July, had painted the fence as his last gift for his mother. But the hurricane’s surge had then knocked it down and buried it in mud.

Eleanor told CCR coordinator Patti Height that her home was open to Patti anytime she wanted to move in. “That is how close we have become with the people we’ve been helping,” laughed Patti. “We have become like family.” Patti began coordinating the relief efforts after taking a leave of absence as a flight attendant. Now at six months and counting, she doesn’t know if she can ever return to her former life.

Pastor Raul Nassar, CCR’s lead coordinator, noticed how the volunteers buoyed the mental outlook of the storm victims. “Whenever the teams were working in a home, the family’s spirits were lifted,” said Raul. “Each team exhibited Christ’s love, and it was contagious to homeowners.” After Eleanor accepted Jesus as her Savior, she immediately asked Raul to begin a Bible study in her home. Both Patti and Raul, leaders at their home church of Calvary Chapel Old Bridge, NJ, are dedicated to continuing CCR’s presence in Union Beach.

Close to 2,000 people have assisted overall in the relief efforts; some have returned numerous times. More than 150 homes in Union Beach alone have received free assistance from CCR volunteers. Superstorm Sandy struck the New York/New Jersey coast this past October with estimated damages of \$50 billion overall, second only in the U.S.

to the \$108 billion caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The water surges were unparalleled in the Northeast coastline’s history. The flooding damaged thousands of residences, displacing their families.

Realizing the gravity of the situation, Calvary Chapels in New Jersey and New York quickly responded to the needs of surrounding communities. While bringing relief aid, they also shared the hope of the Gospel. CC Old Bridge and Cornerstone CC of Howell, NJ, initially partnered to launch CCR. They were soon joined by more than 100 churches.

Another Union Beach couple, Bill (82) and Joann (71) Rothermal, were also deeply impacted by the storm. Joann wanted CCR’s help but let it be known that she was mad at God for a lifetime of disappointments. Patti replied that Joann’s resistance to the Lord was not going to deter CCR. “You can pray, but count me out!” Joann told Patti. As teams continued serving, Joann began softening. After a CC Boston, MA, team did electrical work, a volunteer asked what was keeping her from receiving Christ. Joann called Patti the next day. “I prayed six times to receive Jesus when I got in bed,” she excitedly told Patti. “Was that enough?” Patti explained that as long as Joann accepted Christ as Savior, she had been granted the gift of salvation.

Jim Shevchenko, another CCR coordinator from CC Old Bridge, said the huge numbers of volunteers coming to their aid impacted the storm victims. “Each resident kept asking me why so many people would give up their vacation time and travel from across the country to help them,” said Jim. “I just smiled and told them, ‘it’s because the love of Christ compels them.’ It was the greatest witness of our Savior we could ever share.”

*CCR is prepared to run through July, when finances are expected to run out. After that, future mission teams are asked to contact area churches with requests for housing.*

**Calvary Chapel Relief**  
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## Relief Teams Impact Lives in New Jersey With Physical Help and the Love of Christ



A team from CC Seneca Falls, NY, insulates and hangs sheetrock in a Union Beach, NJ, home owned by Bill and Joann Rothermal. It had been damaged by Hurricane Sandy.



Pastor Raul Nassar, front, of Calvary Chapel Relief, guides CC Old Bridge students as they remove damaged boardwalk in Ocean Grove, NJ.



Volunteers from CC Old Bridge, NJ, remove sand that was dumped on the boardwalk at Ocean Grove, NJ, during the storm on October 29.



A CC Costa Mesa, CA, team examines areas still in need of demolition. Much work has been accomplished while much more still needs to be done. Photo by Jason Samia