

Counseling

Four Bridges has been used by God to connect the Body of Christ after several hurricanes during this 2006 season. We have been in various states and seen how the winds and flood waters have destroyed all kinds of property.

Each person is special. And each person's story is unique. It was instructive when we heard the accounts of several family members that went through the same circumstances together. What happened externally in the environment was the same. But how it has impacted them internally varied in small or large ways.

For those who faced life-threatening conditions the body and mind went into high alert mode. The flood waters sent some to the roof of their home until the helicopter or boat arrived. Some drove at night through driving rain while fearing flying debris. Some saw others injured or killed.

Those in the temporary shelters were relieved. The state of shock ranged from mild to severe. Anxiety levels were high. Uncertainty gave way to hope for many and despair for others as the news came.

Weeks later the shelters emptied. People began staying in apartments or had gone back to rebuild. It was necessary to steadily take constructive steps of action in order to solve the many problems. There were the external challenges of repairs for the rebuilders and starting over from scratch for the evacuees that decided not to return. Yet under the surface there were layers of wounds that were not getting better.

Before the first hurricane and between hurricanes Four Bridges prayerfully developed a wide range of counseling materials. The processes that produced the present products are continually being improved. Therefore what will be added online next month will be better than was put there last month.

How it began is that the founder, John S. Oliver, gathered an abundance of interviews. He contacted evacuees in the greater Dallas area. He met with them in person or talked on the phone. He also phoned those who have been rebuilding all along the Gulf Coast. He got their signed permission to use the interviews to help develop counseling materials. These audio recorded interviews were passed along to volunteers that selected the most revealing segments. These volunteers added descriptive terms to be associated with that audio clip. Some examples of those terms were: depressed, discouraged, disoriented, confused, overwhelmed, hopeless, insecure, fearful, etc.

Another team of volunteers studied the various Bible promise books and counseling aids that are made available to the volunteer phone counselors that take the calls after a Billy Graham crusade on TV or similar Christian phone bank. They created a cross indexed way to go from any felt need to the Bible verses that addressed that need. This interactive reference was put online and on the quarterly CDs.

Another group of volunteer seminary students and graduates was invited to hear the selected segments of the interviews online after they had entered a pass code. They saw the terms that the editors used to describe the thoughts and feelings of that person. They could add other terms. They could access the online Bible references. And they were invited to create a short, medium and long reply to not just that person in the recording but knowing that there will be hundreds more like them after the future hurricanes.

These small units are like the size of a pocket size daily devotional. The medium size is one page. And the long size is as the Holy Spirit leads. These are words of encouragement, comfort, exhortation, edification, etc. Then these small teachings and other kinds of messages are cross indexed online and on the CDs.