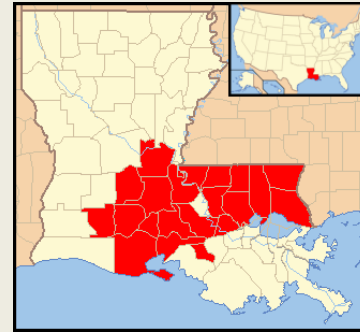


# Churches Helping Brethren in Need

A Case Study

# August, 2016



- The southern part of Louisiana was devastated by flooding. Some areas received 24 inches of rain in a 48 hour period.
- 13 people died, and the property damage was estimated at 10–15 billion.
- \*14 families in the Southside church of Christ in Gonzalez, LA received very heavy damage to their homes. Costs to repair these homes came to about \$677,000.

# Response from Brethren

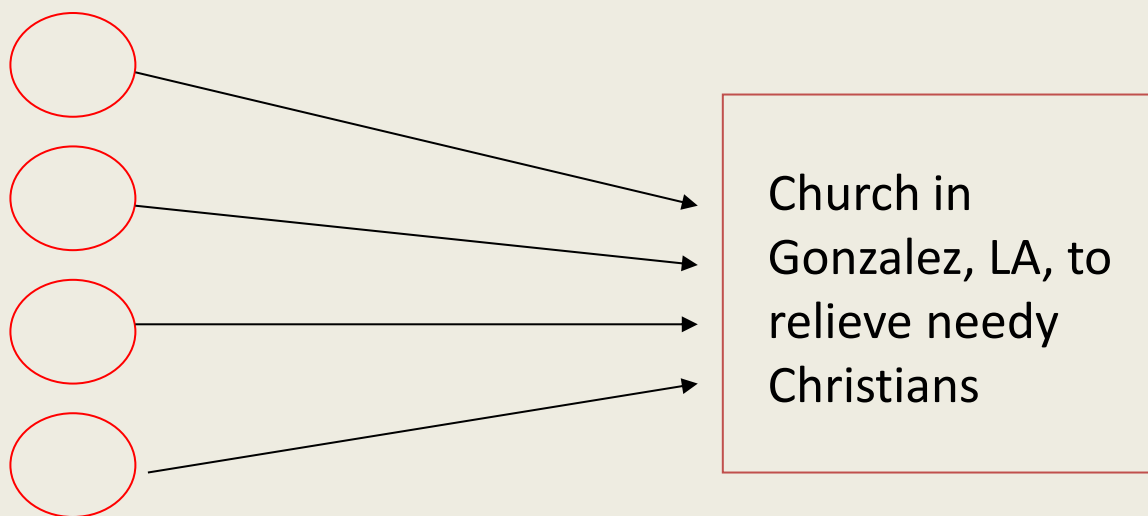
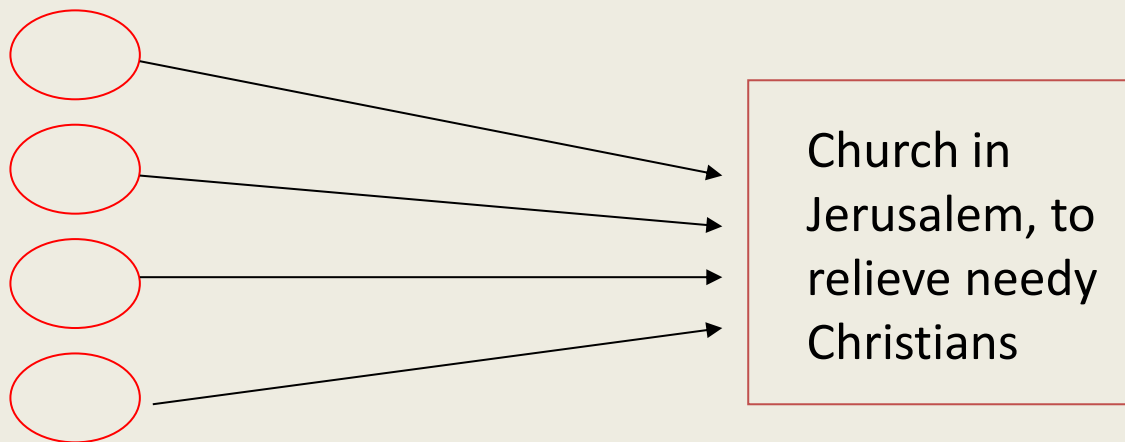
- Prattmont, along with many other local churches (90) and individuals, sent money to the elders of the Southside church of Christ to distribute to the families in need.
- Not surprisingly, the need was very quickly met (in fact, about 100 checks were returned).
- Did the church here have authority to do this? Does the N.T. indicate in any way God's approval for what we did, and the way we did it?

# Yes, Clear Authority

- What we and many other local churches did mirrors a situation described in the N.T.
- Local churches in Macedonia, Achaia, and Galatia all sent funds to relieve the needs of the saints in the church at Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25–33; 1 Cor. 16:1–4; 2 Cor. 8–9).
- God showed us how to do it, and we did it just the way He showed us.

# Illustrated

Each local church  
chose its own  
messengers to  
travel with Paul to  
deliver this aid.



# We Would Not Have Done This...

- If each family had been able to provide for its own needs (1 Thess. 4:11–12; 2 Thess. 3:12).
- If these families had other family members who could meet their needs (1 Tim. 5:8).
- If the Southside church would have been able to meet their needs (Acts 2, 4, 6).
- Obviously, the need was so enormous that help from others was needed.

# What We Did Not Do

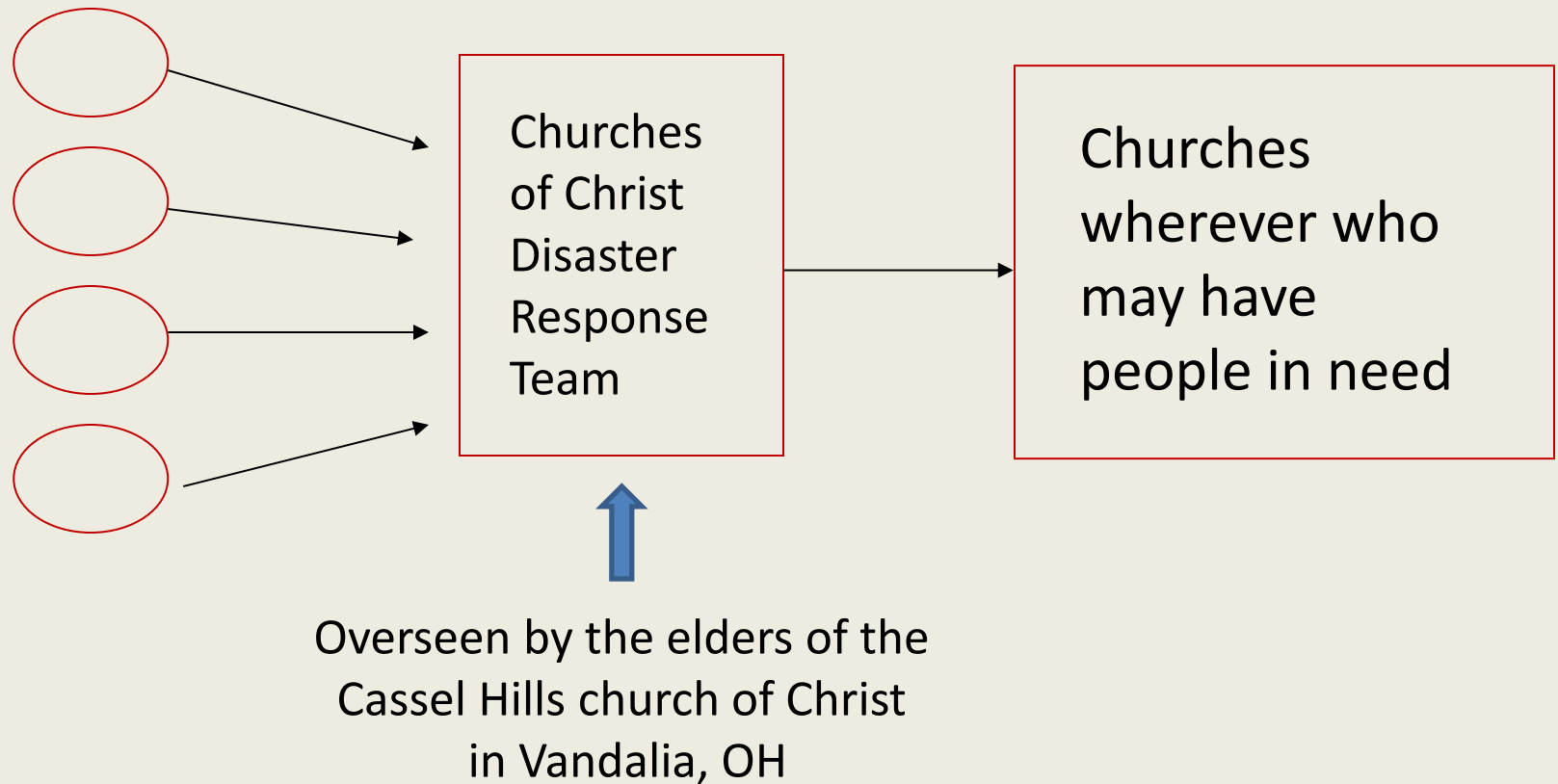
- The church here did NOT send any money for non-Christians in the affected area.
  - “The collection for the **saints**” (1 Cor. 16:1).
  - “I am going to...minister to the **saints**” (Rom. 15:25).
  - “Contribution for the poor among the **saints** (Rom. 15:26).
  - “That my service...be acceptable to the **saints** (Rom. 15:31).
  - “Ministering to the **saints**” (2 Cor. 8:4).
  - “Concerning the ministering to the **saints**” (2 Cor. 9:1).
- Individually, we most certainly could (Gal. 6:10).

# What We Did Not Do

- The church here did NOT send the money through a “middle man”—it was sent directly to the need.
  - We did not send the money to a sponsoring church, one that would be responsible for collecting all the funds from various churches, and then distributing those funds to those in need.
  - We did not send the money to any benevolent organization, who would then be responsible for relieving the need.



# What Some Churches Do



# Observations About This Method

- Why would we even WANT do it differently than the way the Lord showed us? Remember how the N.T. has trained us to think...
  - By what (or whose) authority do we do these things? (Matthew 21:23–27).
  - From heaven or from men? (Matthew 21:25).
  - Do not go beyond the teaching of Christ (2 John 1:9); do not add to nor take from God's word (Rev. 22:18–19).

# Observations About This Method

- Do we want elders elsewhere deciding where OUR money should be sent? (1 Peter 5:2).
  - The elders here at Prattmont assessed the need, made a decision about how much to send, and then informed the church here.
  - In the Jerusalem relief effort described earlier, although many local churches were involved, each church selected its own messengers (1 Cor. 16:1–4; 2 Cor. 8:18–23), and each church had its own “gift” (1 Cor. 16:4).

# Observations About This Method

- Related to the previous point, where is the authority for a church to even create a separate organization, overseen by its elders—one to which other churches and individuals are asked to contribute?
  - Yes, oversee the flock of God which is among you (1 Peter 5:2), and yes, oversee the collective activities of that flock, including how funds are spent.
  - But no, do not try to oversee anything else.

# What We Did Not Do

- The church here did NOT send money to fund a work proposed by the Southside church, one for which they didn't have sufficient funds. The money was sent to relieve "their **need**" (2 Cor. 8:14, NAS, ESV).
  - Some reason: If one church (or many) can send to another to meet a benevolent need, why can't they do the same for some evangelistic endeavor?
  - First, no example of such. We do, however, have examples of churches sending directly to a preacher (Phil. 4:10–20; 2 Cor. 11:7–9). Can we see how this helps each church maintain its independence?

# What We Did Not Do

- On this matter of relieving “their **need**”...
  - Suppose I have money to feed, clothe, house, and care for my family, and I make a contribution to the Lord according to my ability.
  - But then I propose to increase my contribution to \$5000/week. Would you consider me in need, an object of charity? Would you give me “alms” (Acts 24:17)?
  - A local church is NOT in **need** just because it desires to meet its obligation to preach to the world.
  - “It is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have” (2 Cor. 8:12).

# What We Did Not Do

- On this matter of relieving “their **need**”...
  - When it comes to evangelizing our community, our country, the world—every local church is equally related to this work.
  - Prattmont needs to do all it can to teach the gospel with the resources it has. We must never seek to do our work **through** another church.
  - We simply cannot have an arrangement where one group of elders is overseeing the activities of several or many churches.

# Conclusion

- To the best of its ability, may this church continue to do ALL God authorizes it to do—nothing more, and nothing less.
- To put it another way, let's make sure we do **God's** work in **God's** way so that **God** is glorified.
- But even if this church does all it's supposed to do, there's still a lot left for ME to do.