



Bastrop County Wildfires

ORIENTATION MANUAL

Thank you!
Your team's dedication and hard work
make recovery from the Bastrop County wildfires possible.

Faith Village is a joint effort of:

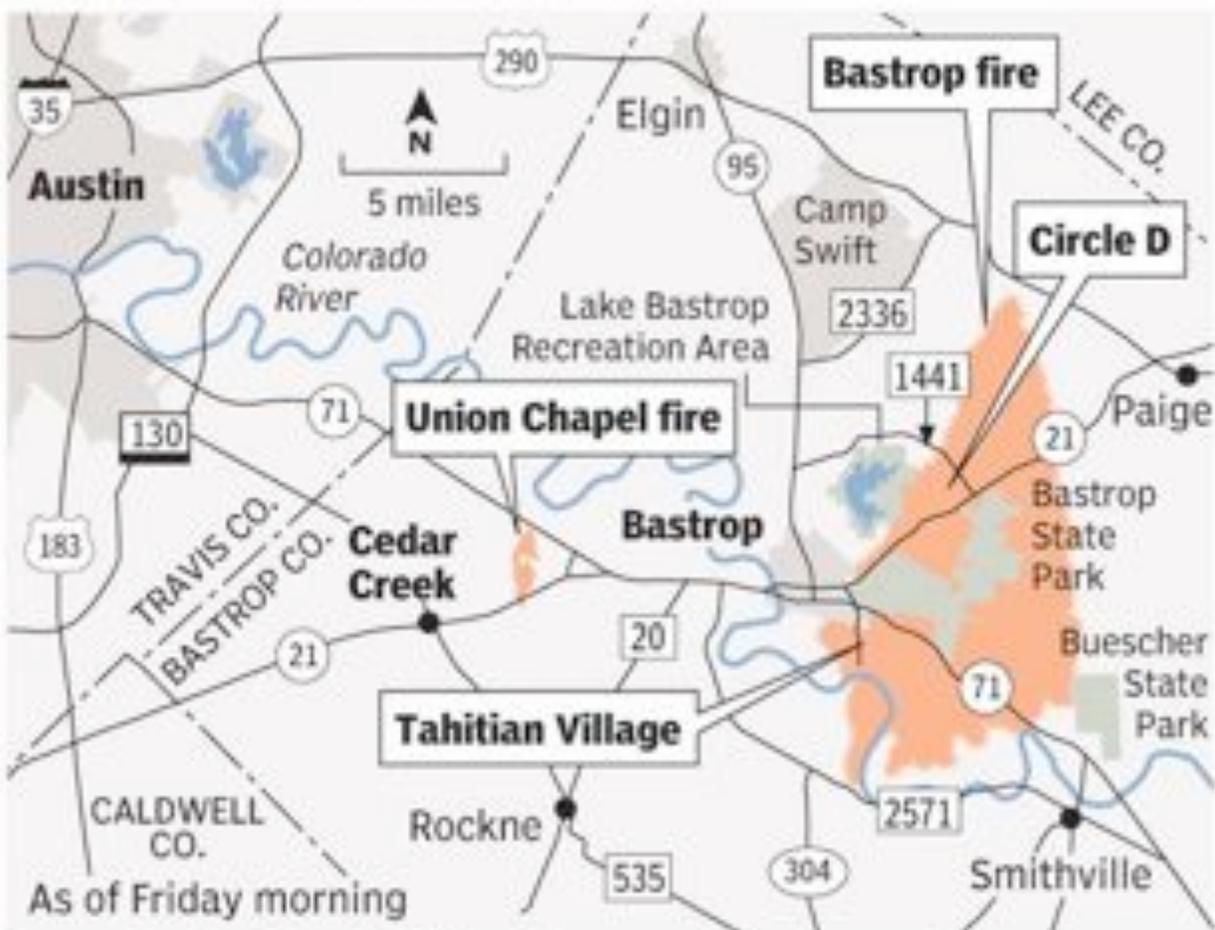
- **Southern Baptist Convention**
First Baptist Church, Smithville, TX
- **Episcopal Diocese of Texas**
Calvary Episcopal Church, Bastrop, TX
- **United Methodist Church, Southwest Texas Conference**
First United Methodist Church, Smithville, TX
- **Presbyterian Church (USA)**
First Presbyterian Church, Smithville, TX

The Bastrop County Wildfires

The Disaster

September 4, 2011: Texas “Lost Pines” region—thousands of acres of loblolly pine trees separated by a hundred miles from their plentiful cousins in East Texas—was struck by the third most destructive wildfire in United States history. A combination of prolonged drought, low humidity, and driving winds combined to turn the pine forest of Bastrop County into a firestorm of epic proportions. Thanks to the heroic efforts of first responders and neighbors helping neighbors, thousands of residents were evacuated safely, but two lives were lost. In a matter of days, the fire burned over 34,000 acres and destroyed—totally—1670 homes. Hundreds whose homes survived were not able to occupy them for one to two weeks, and in many cases returned to homes heavily damaged by smoke and without power for many more days.

Bastrop County wildfires



Source: Bastrop County Office of Emergency Management

AMERICAN-STATESMAN

The Response

The faith community responded immediately in many ways. For example:

- Organizing —
- Shelter —
- Work Site Staging —
- Care to the Caregivers —
- Organizing to support all of these activities —
- Water and Sanitation –
- Warehousing –

Volunteer Villages

The Volunteer Village concept is a “village” prepared to house volunteers who are coming in from all over the U.S. (and the world!) to provide relief services for people in greatest need.

The Volunteer Villages are guided by a spirit-of-Christ-like cooperation among local congregations, their regional and national organizations, and the volunteer teams. While designed for use by teams registered with the participating faith groups, the camp will be open on a reasonable basis to house volunteer teams from other denominations, faith traditions, partner organizations, and college or other civic groups.

Faith Village

Faith Village is a joint venture of the following organizations:

- Baptist General Convention of Texas, represented locally by First Baptist Church, Smithville
- Episcopal Diocese of Texas, represented by Calvary Episcopal Church, Bastrop
- United Methodist Church, Southwest Texas District, represented by First United Methodist Church, Smithville, Texas
- Presbyterian Church (USA), represented by First Presbyterian Church, Smithville

“Since there will never cease to be some need on the earth, I therefore command you, ‘Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbors in your land.’”
Deuteronomy 15:11

Facilities

Faith Village is very basic, with conditions similar to a camping experience. The village is located in and on property owned by the First Baptist Church, Smithville, Texas, and is designed to accommodate up to 40 volunteers. :

- Sleeping quarters in a heated and air conditioned gymnasium setting, on bunk beds or air mattresses
- Indoor toilets supplemented by nearby trailer toilets
- Kitchen
- Shower facilities supplemented by nearby trailer toilets
- Dining area
- Sinks

- Gathering area for groups
- Parking space
- Nearby laundromat for limited laundry needs (Village Manager(s) will provide guidelines and instructions)
- ***The Faith Village housing facility IS NOT suitable for anyone with a physical disability.***

Staff

Faith Village will have an on-site Manager, and will coordinate with Housing Coordinator. These individuals can answer questions you may have about the Village, the work, or anything else you need to know.

Staff members manage the Village according to established Faith Village policies, and it is important to recognize their role in enforcing these policies. They are also responsible for making your experience in central Texas as memorable and comfortable as possible, so feel free to speak with them about any problems or concerns.

Teams

A team is a group of volunteers that can be anywhere between 3 and 40 in size. Most teams commit to one week at a time. Teams register in advance with using the online registration site operated by the United Methodist Church. Each team must designate a team leader who will liaise with the Housing Coordinator, the Village Manager, the Worksite Assignment Manager, and the Construction Supervisor onsite. **Teams pay \$20.00 per night per person.** This helps to offset the operating costs of the village, including all meals for the volunteers. **(Please note: Please do not ask for a “reduced fee” if you bring your own food or stay elsewhere – this fee applies to everyone, and all volunteers are expected to participate equally in the Volunteer Village experience.)**

Who can be a member of a team?

- Members of any faith
- Individuals aged 12 and up
- People in good physical condition
- Anyone with an open and flexible attitude

Who should not volunteer with Faith Village?

- People with health problems or who are sensitive to heat
- Individuals who are not team players
- Anyone who already has work lined up with another organization but is only looking for a place to stay. (You **must** notify the registration staff if you already have a pre-existing arrangement with another organization, otherwise the work assigned for you will be left undone.)

Teams can make reservations for the volunteer villages using the web reservation system at <http://www.umcswtx.org/faith-village-registration>

Team Leader

Each arriving group will assign one person to be the Team Leader. The Team Leader is responsible for the conduct and effectiveness of the team while they are at Faith Village. Any difficulties arising with an individual from a team will be referred to their Team Leader to handle. The Team Leader should review and distribute this document and other materials sent from the registration site or from the Village Manager to all team members as far in advance of the trip as possible. ***All children 12 and up MUST have supervision by their OWN team leader/team members. There is NO ONE onsite to supervise and/or entertain them.***

Responsibilities of the Team Leader:

- Before arrival
 - Register team members with Faith Village
 - Send Volunteer Team Skills Assessment Form to the Village Manager. (Please send this at least one or, if possible, two week(s) prior to arrival)
 - Apprise the Village Manager of any special conditions/restrictions concerning the team or team members

- Upon arrival
 - Turn in **legible and complete** General Release, Indemnification Agreement and Authorization for Medical Treatment forms for each team member. Be sure these forms have been signed and witnessed.
 - Submit payment for the team
 - \$20 per team member per night (\$20 X number of team members X nights at the Village)
 - Check should be payable to “Faith Village.”
 - Provide two cell phone numbers to the Village Manager

- While in Faith Village
 - Work with Village Manager to arrange the day-to-day activities of the team
 - Keep the Village Manager up to date on fluctuations in team numbers, logistics problems, or other items needing attention
 - Ensure that team members participate in the village cleanup, cooking, maintenance, administration as assigned by the Village Manager
 - Ensure that every team member has safety equipment appropriate for the jobs they are doing (masks, gloves, first aid kits, etc.)
 - Remind every team member to return tools and equipment at the end of the day to the site manager or to where they got it and to bring attention to any repairs or replacements needed
 - Complete an Incident Report form if there is an injury among the team members, or any incident of theft or altercation

Shared Responsibilities

Teams will most likely be sharing the village with other teams from around the country. This is a community that shares the responsibility for keeping the village functioning and tidy. Teams will rotate responsibilities among the task list, and the team leader will assign members of each team to complete them. Everyone should expect to participate in some of these tasks throughout the week:

- Plan and cook meals
- Clean hand washing stations, showers and toilets
- Pickup around the grounds and empty trash cans
- Straighten meeting
- Do maintenance on equipment
- Build or repair structures at the village
- Clean kitchen
- Assist in the village office
- Other tasks as assigned

“We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us.”
Romans 12:6

Flexibility is the key!

Team members should be willing and available to pitch in where needed.

Devotions

Faith Village strives to create a community that is steeped in the Christian traditions of giving and reflection. To that end, time is set aside for devotions every evening. This allows team members to process their experiences in the “burn scar,” as well as contemplate the spiritual context of what, for many, is a life-changing experience. Teams may designate a leader to guide the group through devotions. Anyone not wishing to participate is free to be absent from these events, but everyone must be respectful of the ecumenical goals that guide the Faith Village mission.

Village Guidelines

No alcohol, drugs or other illegal substances are allowed in the villages. Smoking is not allowed anywhere on the grounds of Faith Village.

Quiet time in the village is very valuable, and volunteers should be sensitive to others’ needs for rest. Each evening, quiet time starts at 10 PM.

Team members should make every attempt to keep Faith Village neat and clean by picking up and disposing of trash. Everyone should be willing to lend a hand whenever possible, and above all to be flexible.

Never unplug anything in order to power up your cell phone, camera or i-Pod – that plug may be keeping hundreds of dollars of meat frozen, or your shower water hot!

While there will be someone at the Faith Village *much of the time*, there will be no way to secure items there. Please leave valuables at home and plan to keep personal valuables with you or locked in vehicles.

Faith Village is a community. Volunteers should feel compelled to participate in group activities to help foster that sense of community, and to get to know one another.

Faith Village has a zero tolerance policy on sexual harassment or physical violence. Any behavior deemed inappropriate by the Village Manager will be cause for the volunteer to be sent home at the team's expense.

The Work

Faith Village will work closely with the Bastrop County Long-Term Recovery Committee, as well as with the local and national organizations of the partners, in ascertaining the needs and the response in the local communities.

Depending on the site, the type of work volunteer teams are engaged in will vary. Some sites are in the rebuilding phase, while others are removing debris and/or cutting trees. In all cases, the Bastrop County Long Term Recovery Team will make every attempt to prioritize families receiving assistance according to their triage guidelines.

*"No one has ever seen God. But if we love one another, God lives in us."
John 4:12*

Under no circumstances does Faith Village discriminate amongst aid recipients on the basis of race or religion.

Oversight

Assessments of the homes will be done by the BCLTRT Case Managers. From that point, the Worksite Assignment Manager generates a work order, and each job is then matched to an incoming team. Every attempt is made to ensure that the required materials are onsite by the team's arrival time, and that the job is matched to the team's skills.

However, flexibility is key!

After the job is explained to the team, teams are supervised onsite either by the Construction Supervisor, the Work Site Assignment Manager, or an experienced member of the team. Volunteers are expected to work to acceptable standards. **The work sites are not places for horseplay.** This is a disaster area, and the situations may be more dangerous than what teams may have experienced in other missions.

A few tips:

- Listen to all instructions and be sure you understand them before proceeding
- Ask questions if you don't know what to do next or how to do it
- Ask the team leader or the Construction Supervisor before you start a new project
- Refer to the team leader or Construction Supervisor any changes, suggestions or concerns.
- If you do not feel comfortable performing a certain task, speak up!

Safety

While Faith Village, our partners and the team leaders will make every attempt to ensure that safety procedures are followed on the worksites, it is ultimately up to each team member to look out for his or her own safety. Teams will be provided with a map of the nearest medical facilities in case of an accident on the worksite. Outlined below are some guidelines to follow:

- It is highly recommended that **steel-toed boots or shoes with a steel shank** be worn on worksites. **Absolutely no flip-flops are allowed on worksites**
- Use sun screen and insect repellent when outside
- Wear a hat during prolonged sun exposure
- Take a break once per hour to get out of the sun and rehydrate
- Wear good gloves
- Wear respirator masks while working in ashes, cinders or dust
- Be mindful of sharp objects—nails, strips of metal, screws, hinges etc.
- Clean all cuts and scrapes **immediately**
- Fill out an incident report whenever an injury occurs, and give it to the Village Manager
- Do not lift objects that are too heavy for you
- Drink plenty of water!!
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Sensitivity

It's hard to predict what the emotional reactions of such a devastating disaster may be on the survivors. People who have lost their homes, their possessions, their livelihoods, their neighborhoods, their friends, their families, may react with a muted awareness, and their sense of security and well-being may be seriously disturbed. Many survivors will want to talk, and they will need to tell of their experiences. We need to listen without judgment and without interjecting our own tales of "disaster". It is OK to react with our own emotions – to cry with those affected. **Listening is helping**, so please be ready to listen with open hearts.

It is important to realize that disaster survivors may be unable to make simple decisions regarding themselves, their recovery and their personal property. These survivors may become dependent upon volunteers. Be careful about giving advice. Gently direct survivors to disaster officials, who are better trained to help. Understand that some survivors are unable to help with clean up and repair because they are physically and emotionally exhausted.

Volunteer workers must respect all personal information obtained from disaster survivors. Ask permission before taking photos. Do not accept any gifts or cash from survivors.

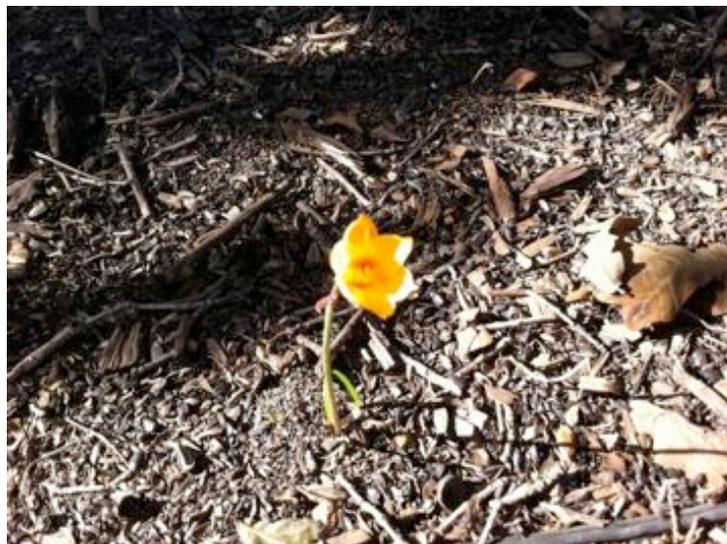
Above all, do not hand out cash to survivors! See below for appropriate giving avenues.

Giving

Your team may have raised funds beyond the village registration fees and travel costs to subsidize your trip. These funds can be utilized in many ways by Faith Village or its partner organizations to assist wildfire survivors in the Texas. These donations will help us continue our operations long into the future, as this operation is long-term, and the recovery efforts will continue for years.

Ways you can help:

- Give Lowe's or Home Depot gift cards to the Village Manager to be used on building sites or at that village
- Give a monetary donation to Faith Village, our local partner organizations, or another organization working on the disaster
- Purchase tools, equipment or building supplies to be used at the villages – ask the Village Manager what is needed
- Volunteer to assist at one of the villages for one month or more
- Raise further funds to send down to the wildfire disaster areas after your trip
- Spread the word about your trip to your home community when you return home
- Recruit new volunteers to come on another team in the future!



Self Care

You will be entering a disaster zone of a magnitude that is hard to imagine from seeing it on TV or in photographs. Seeing this type of devastation has a different emotional impact from any other mission you may have been on, for example to developing countries to build churches or homes. In essence, you may experience it as a **traumatic event**. The sense of tragic loss can be powerful, and the scale can be overwhelming.

It is very common, in fact, quite normal, for people to experience emotional aftershocks or stress reactions after experiencing a traumatic event. Sometimes the stress reactions appear immediately after the traumatic event, or they may appear a few hours or a few days later. In some cases, weeks or months may pass before the stress reactions reoccur. The signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may last a few days, a few weeks or a few months.

On the following page you will find a chart with some common symptoms of a stress reaction.

Please be mindful of these symptoms in yourself and in your teammates, both during and after the trip, so that appropriate support can be offered. With understanding and the support of loved ones, the stress reactions can pass more quickly. Participation in devotions and debriefings can help someone cope with these new and unfamiliar feelings. A pastor or religious leader can also provide guidance in coping.

Occasionally the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance from a trauma specialist, mental health counselor or clinically trained pastoral care giver may be necessary. This does not imply weakness or incapacity. It simply indicates that the particular event was too powerful for the person to manage alone.

“Trauma calls into question basic human relationships. It breaches attachments of family, friendship, love and community. It shatters the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to others. It undermines the belief systems that give meaning to human experience. It violates the victim's faith in a natural or divine order and casts the victim into a state of existential crisis.”
Judith Herman, M.D., Trauma and Recovery, 1992.

SIGNS OF STRESS OR EMOTIONAL AFTERSHOCK

PHYSICAL	COGNITIVE	EMOTIONAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shock, numbness • Nausea • Exhaustion • Muscle tremors, aches • Twitches • Chest pain • Rapid heart rate • Headaches • Weakness, Fatigue • Dizziness • Profuse sweating • Elevated BP • Apathy • Chills • Insomnia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blaming someone • Confusion • Poor attention • Poor decisions • Poor concentration • Memory problems • Hyper vigilance • Nightmares • Intrusive images • Poor problem solving • Poor abstract thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety • Guilt • Numbing • Grief and traumatic grief • Denial • Panic feelings, startle response • Emotional shock • Uncertainty • Depression • Apprehension • Intense anger • Irritability • Agitation • Loss of emotional control; outbursts • Euphoria • Obsessiveness
RELATIONAL	BEHAVIORAL	SPIRITUAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawal from family, co-workers, colleagues • Withdrawal from organizations and affiliations • Withdrawal from social and faith-based affiliations • Isolation • Unemployment or underemployment • Discontinuation of educational goals or lack of motivation to attempt • Community involvement or lack of political involvement • Institutional involvement with: Social Security, VA, criminal justice, federal agencies, FEMA, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in speech • Withdrawal • Emotional outbursts • Accident prone • Potential for violence • Suspiciousness • Loss or increase of appetite • Alcohol consumption • Inability to rest • Pacing • Change in sexual functioning • Periods of crying • Proneness to accidents • Recklessness • Non- specific bodily complaints • Hyper-alert to environment • Ritualistic behavior • Criminal behavior; incarceration • Substance abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions about faith • Self-blame • Guilt, survivor guilt • Anger at God • Anger • Realization of vulnerability and mortality • Withdrawal from faith and religion • Concern about hereafter • Questions about good and evil • Questioning God • Comfort in knowing deceased is with God • Redefining moral values and intangible priorities • Coping with fear; • Searching for meaning and hope; • Concern about vengeance justice and forgiveness; • Spiritual “awakening” or strengthening of faith and religion • Relying on faith and prayer