

Hi! I hope you all are doing well by the grace of God.

As you may all know, on Wednesday, September 20th, Puerto Rico (PR) was hit very hard by Hurricane Maria. The recovery process in the island is being measured in terms of months and in some matters, in years. As the authorities continue to search, it is difficult to grasp the magnitude of the effects of this storm on a 100 by 35 miles island.

I believe that now is a good time to make a difference in the lives of our brothers and sisters in PR by contributing to the efforts our team is setting up to aid local churches, churches' members, and the broader community in the island. I believe that Iglesia Gracia Soberana de Gaithersburg with the help of the Church can make a difference in the life of specific brothers and sisters we know and we would like to do this with the help of friends.

Last year I became the president of ReformaDos (<http://reformados.org>) a ministry based on Puerto Rico that exists to rescue the understanding and proclamation of the Gospel through offering various teaching events such as conferences, workshops, and on-line seminars. When I accepted this position, I mention to the leaders, first I represent Christ, secondly my local church but I also represent Sovereign Grace Churches. Our God has been doing amazing things in this island and He is using ReformaDos(R2). Just to give you an idea, last year we had over 800 people attending the annual conference, on-line worship seminars, pastors calling and expressing appreciation, and as recent as last month, I was in PR with a group of 40 pastors and leaders being trained on expository preaching.

One of the biggest effect that R2 his having is uniting pastors that are moving from a pragmatic understanding of church to teaching sound doctrine. Most of them feel lonely during this process and R2 serve as a glue to let them know that they are not alone as they walk this challenge transition. Many of these pastors have become dear friends, some of them have stay at my home. We want to be with them during this most difficult trial they are walking.

My desire is to set up a fund to help specific churches. These local expressions of the Church are gospel-centered churches striving to proclaim sound doctrine to a culture saturated by pragmatic religion and prosperity Gospel. I keep thinking of Galatians 6:10, *"So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."*

I have been in communication with pastors in the island and they all are trusting in God and hoping we will be alongside of them throughout this season of hardship. I'm planning to go to PR as soon as it is safe to travel to visit pastors, asses the need and just to communicate that we are with them during these times. I'm convinced this is an excellent opportunity for brothers and sisters united by Him to let God use us to give hope and strength to weary pastors and to proclaim in tangible ways the only message that can give true comfort.

Sunday I was talking over the phone with a pastor (and friend) in PR when he said, "Just listening to you bring peace to me during this time because I know I'm not walking this alone."

The plan is to create a fund to help specific churches and their congregations.

Here's the list of local churches:

- Iglesia Torre Fuerte - Caguas, Pastor Richard Gonzales
- Iglesia del Centro - Arecibo, Pastor Gadiel Rios
- Iglesia Gracia Redentora - Vega Baja, Pastor Xavier Torrado
- Iglesia Redimidos – Quebradillas, Pastor Josue Caceres
- Iglesia La Travesia – San Juan, Pastor Ronnie Garcia
- Iglesia AMEC – Canóvanas, Pastor Mizrain Esquilin

Also, the projected spending of the funds would be divided among two main purposes. First, seventy percent will be dedicated to providing for the needs of the churches. Possible examples would be to replace damage furniture to people who lost theirs due to flooding, contributing to the rebuilding of a home of a member of the local church, giving monetary assistance to pastors to help cover the church's rent expense since tithes and offering might be very low in the coming months, and buying generators that could be set up in places to bless the community by storing medicines that need refrigeration. Some other plans we could use these funds would be by help set up e-teams for construction as needed for church members or as an outreach opportunity in the communities. Again, I think we have a great opportunity to serve those who belong to the household of God in Puerto Rico.

Second, thirty percent will be dedicated to long term theological relief. Funds will be used for training workshop, provision of books and other materials all free of charge.

In the month of October, I'm planning to take 4 trips to the island to take supplies and some Honda 2000i quiet generators that were donated (\$1,000 each). This generator is small enough that can get check on commercial airlines. Also during these trips, I will visit the pastors, take initial money for immediate need and access next steps on how to better serve them with the funds.

The funds will be managed by the elders of Iglesia Gracia Soberana de Gaithersburg (www.graciasob.org/leadership/) and the leadership of ReformaDos (www.reformados.org) All donations will be a decision of local churches in Puerto Rico. They are the ones that know the needs of the community and how to better use the funds in the recovery efforts.

You can send your donation by mail to. Because of the cost of using the web payment. One option is to do a collection at church and send a check.

Iglesia Gracia Soberana – Hurricane Maria R2 Fund
630 Hurdle Mill Pl
Gaithersburg, MD 20877

Or by accessing this link

Thanks for considering supporting the church in Puerto Rico during this time of need.

Joselo Mercado
Pastor de Gracia Sobnerana de Gaiothersburg

Presidente de Reformados