

HOMES FOR THE HOMELESS PROJECT: GRENADA

Hurricane Ivan struck the Caribbean island of Grenada in September, 2004 leaving in its wake over 90% of the houses seriously damaged or destroyed. Ten months later, hurricane Emily also hit the Island causing further damage to homes, many of them still covered only by tattered tarpaulins.

After an extensive relief effort, Ministries In Action embarked on a recovery phase early in 2005. Trusting the Lord to provide the resources, MIA made the commitment to build twenty, two-bedroom concrete houses of 540 square feet under a project called "Homes For the Homeless" (HFH). A Committee drawn from different evangelical churches was installed and architectural drawings were procured. The project received the blessings of the Government of Grenada and the plans were duly approved by the Emergency Housing Committee. From donations received, materials for the first eight houses were purchased in the US and shipped to Grenada, mostly duty-free.

The HFH concept includes MIA providing the building materials for construction, from pouring the floor upwards, recruiting work teams to build the houses and paying for skilled labor (if not donated). Candidates must have lost their home in the hurricane and clearly have no means of replacing it, must own the land on which the house is to be built, and must sign an agreement by which they agree to repay half of these costs (interest-free) on terms they put forward. All of this is subject to their working along in the construction. Repaid funds are used in the building of further homes.

On March 15th, 2005, a small team from a Men's Bible Study started by MIA 39 years ago, started work on the first house. Six more teams comprising 118 persons followed during the summer at the end of which all walls and roofs were up on the first five houses spread over three parishes of the Island. Even in their incomplete stages, two of them afforded shelter to other families in the area during hurricane Emily in July 2005.

Since then, the Committee in Grenada has worked hard to have these houses completed, although their gallant and sacrificial efforts have been severely hampered by the shortage of skilled labor and cement blocks in post-hurricane Grenada and, later, by an inadequate supply of imported cement. Skilled workers at affordable prices continue to be a troubling problem. However, four of these houses are already occupied and the fifth should be soon.

Eighteen months after Ivan, those who received insurance monies have greatly enhanced the quality of housing on the Island. But many still do not have a decent roof over their heads and clearly cannot afford one. Meanwhile, we have a number of applicants who are anxiously waiting to hear from us. The need is critical – for funds to purchase building materials and to pay for labor on the Island, as well as for work teams comprising skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled persons who would 'give a cup of cold water to the least'. Would you join us in this mission?

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*From Brother Dhan Lalsee
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