

Grace in Action Fund Launches to Help Keep Western NC Housed

Campaign addresses continuing housing crisis following Hurricane Helene; \$85,000 already raised to support local families

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Stable housing is the bedrock of a thriving community. That's why we're all in on this effort - because housing is dignity, stability, and hope.”

*Rachel Brown, President of
the Land of the Sky
Association of REALTORS®*

Carolina's housing crisis continues in the area's slow recovery from Hurricane Helene, two local organizations are stepping up to help keep families in their homes.

On July 22, Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church and the Land of the Sky Association of REALTORS® (LOTSAR) launched the [Grace in Action Fund](#), a housing assistance initiative that provides direct rent, mortgage, and utility assistance to those in need. At the launch event, which was sponsored by HomeTrust Bank, the partners announced that more than \$85,000 has already been raised to kickstart the effort. Donations included a \$10,000

contribution from LOTSAR.

The new fund builds on Grace Covenant's emergency relief efforts following Hurricane Helene, which delivered more than \$5.5 million in housing and utility assistance to more than 2,500 people across WNC from November to June. And for LOTSAR, it's one of many ways the organization works with a variety of groups to address Western North Carolina's housing challenges.

But recovery is far from over. Tourism still hasn't fully rebounded, and thousands of service and hospitality workers continue to face reduced hours or job losses. That instability is showing up in housing. On the first day of reopening rent assistance on July 22, 110 people came to Grace Covenant Church seeking help. The church provided \$67,000 on the spot.

“Helene didn't just damage homes—it disrupted lives, jobs, and entire support systems,” said Marcia Mount Shoop, pastor at Grace Covenant. “Even as the headlines fade, the needs in our region are still real. We're asking our neighbors to put their Grace into Action and help keep families housed.”

As just one example of area residents who've been helped by Grace Covenant, Micah Taylor Hayes of Asheville applied for assistance in October 2024 after his car broke down while he was delivering supplies to Hurricane Helene survivors. The unexpected repair costs set him back several thousand dollars, putting both him and his son at risk of losing their home.

"If I hadn't received assistance through Grace Covenant, I could have easily been foreclosed on my mortgage or just given up," he said.

Hayes knows just how critical housing can be, especially when you're rebuilding your life from the ground up. As a young adult, he served four years in the U.S. Army before moving to Charlotte, where he began struggling with substance use disorder. That struggle eventually led to 76 months of incarceration, but it also marked a turning point.

"While I would never say that prison saved my life, it did allow me to really sit down and focus on what I wanted my life to look like when I got my freedom back," Hayes said.

Today, Hayes works for Operation Gateway, a local organization that helps individuals who are reentering society after prison or rehab. In the wake of Hurricane Helene, Hayes connected dozens of clients with Grace Covenant's relief efforts.

"Grace Covenant saved people from being on the streets," Hayes said. "But there are still a lot of people who need help. We can't forget about them."

Another recipient of housing support is Jimmy Lytle, a UNC Asheville student from Shelby, North Carolina, who's on track to graduate this December. When Hurricane Helene hit, his job was temporarily shut down, and his income dried up just as rent was coming due. Thankfully, he received emergency assistance through Grace Covenant.

"It was a blessing," he said. "It finally felt like everything was going to be okay. It was a joyful feeling."

Stories like these stretch across 12 Western North Carolina counties—from Buncombe to Burke to Haywood—where the Grace in Action Fund serves as a fast, flexible lifeline. The fund operates with both public and private dollars, allowing quick turnaround and direct impact.

"As REALTORS®, we know stable housing is the bedrock of a thriving community," said Rachel Brown, President of the Land of the Sky Association of REALTORS®. "That's why we're all in on this effort—because housing is dignity, stability, and hope."

The church and LOTSAR are now working with both individuals and organizations to build support for the Grace in Action Fund. For updates and for information on how to make a charitable donation, visit gcpcusa.org.

About Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church

Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church (GCPC) is a congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) located in Asheville, NC. A Matthew 25 and More Light congregation, GCPC is guided by a bold mission: to practice theological curiosity, moral courage, abundant compassion, and beloved community. Since Hurricane Helene, GCPC has become a regional leader in housing justice, distributing more than \$5.5 million in rent and mortgage relief and building partnerships that extend well beyond traditional church walls. For more information, visit gcpcusa.org.

About the Land of the Sky Association of REALTORS® (LOTSAR)

The Land of the Sky Association of REALTORS® (LOTSAR) has been dedicated to supporting Hurricane Helene relief in Western North Carolina. In the aftermath of the storm, LOTSAR building served as a collection point for donated supplies from REALTORS across the state, which were then distributed by volunteers to local organizations assisting neighbors in need. Members and staff also helped homeowners and tenants receive \$1.2 million in recovery funds through the National Association of REALTORS® and NC REALTORS®. Additional efforts included sharing resources for rebuilding, guidance on state and federal assistance applications, providing water testing information when the local supply was compromised, working alongside an affordable housing developer to offer temporary housing cottages, and hosting presentations on legal and regulatory issues related to the hurricane's impact on real estate. For more information, visit lotsar.org.

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