

# Stubborn Thread of Hope

By Evan S. Drake

There are moments when time appears to bend. When the predictable rhythm of our lives is disrupted by a single, unforgettable event. These moments become markers: before the moment and after the moment. They shape our stories, our faith, and even our professions. For those of us living and working in Western North Carolina, Hurricane Helene was one such moment.

We had weekend plans – simple ones, joyful ones. My children were going camping with their grandparents. I was looking forward to hosting a long-awaited girls’ night with close friends to celebrate my birthday. It was all mapped out, the kind of weekend that feels both ordinary and special. However, instead of a weekend full of games, s’mores, fireflies, and snack boards, Helene descended, and what followed was unlike anything we had experienced before. Hurricane Helene tore through western North Carolina with a force that felt both relentless and deeply personal. Trees snapped. Homes toppled. Roads disappeared under floodwaters. Power lines fell, communication vanished, and neighborhoods were left isolated, cut off from the outside world and from one another. In the earliest moments, it wasn’t resilience we felt. It was defeat. There was a heaviness in the air that matched the silence outside. The landscape we knew was changed in a matter of hours, and the days that followed were marked by devastation, uncertainty, and a stillness that was both eerie and holy.

After the initial storm passed, I remember sitting at the table with my husband, playing cards by candlelight. The power had been out for a few days, the roads remained impassable. There was no internet, no phones buzzing, no whir of traffic. There was no noise; like the quiet that settles after a snowfall in the mountains. In a world always racing, it was as if God pressed pause. There was only the hum of stillness and the flicker of flame. And in that quiet, I began to reflect not just on what had been lost, but on what truly mattered: people, presence, and the grace of survival. That quiet moment has stayed with me all year.

I didn’t realize how much noise I had allowed into my life until it all disappeared. Nor how profoundly I needed that disconnection from the noise until it came. What felt like isolation at first turned out to be sacred ground. Psalm 46:10 says, “Be still, and know that I am God” (NIV). In the forced pause of the hurricane’s wake, that scripture became a lived experience. It slowed us down in a way that was unfamiliar, but deeply necessary. With no outside world to check in on, we checked in with each other.

When the quiet gave way to the reality of need, the response was immediate. In the chaos, pharmacy professionals stepped in quietly, but powerfully. Pharmacists, technicians, and students across the region worked to ensure patients could still access their medications. Once lines of communication began to be restored, text chains lit up as we worked to share which pharmacies were operational, where supplies could be found, where insulin drops would be made. And beyond medicinal needs, many volunteered at local supply hubs, helping communities obtain vital essentials such as food, water, batteries, diapers, formula, flashlights, and much more. I volunteered at my local church, which had become a supply hub, serving in the car line, asking neighbors what they needed most and helping coordinate those supplies. While we waited, most people would let me pray with them - sometimes with tears, sometimes with silence, always with the hope they knew they weren’t alone.

When pharmacists graduate, we recite a profession-wide commitment:  
*“I will consider the welfare of humanity and relief of suffering my primary concerns.”*<sup>1</sup>

After Helene, that oath wasn’t just ceremony – it took on flesh and blood. It looked like filling prescriptions via generator. It looked like students organizing clean-up crews on their days off. It looked like volunteering at the local supply hubs. It looked like the pharmacy community running entirely on adrenaline, coffee, and love for their community.

But even as many worked to meet physical needs, the emotional and spiritual weight of what had happened was deeply felt. I won’t pretend that my faith didn’t waver in those first few days. I prayed—but I also questioned. Why here? Why now? Why so much loss? Yet even in the silence, God was present. Sometimes it was in big ways – a load of supplies from colleagues in Charlotte that arrived just in time. Sometimes it was smaller – like the neighbor who walked over to share bottled water, or the countless chainsaws that were pulled out to help our community.

*“Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”* (Philippians 2:4, ESV)

That verse echoed again and again as we cared for one another – not just as professionals, but as people. And our faith, though rattled, began to root itself deeper. Because even in the aftermath, we witnessed the

unmistakable fingerprints of God through His people. It was seen in the helping hands that reached across county lines and state borders. Teams from unaffected regions showing up with not just supplies but their skillset – even linemen from Canada! Large parking lots became makeshift command centers, filled with rows upon rows of power trucks, supply vehicles, and emergency responders. Donations poured in, sent from churches and communities hundreds of miles away who simply heard we were in need. The local radio station became the hub for callers to check-in on loved ones they couldn't reach. Every day, new supplies arrived. Every day, someone new offered help. Neighbors hiked through washed-out roads to check on each other. Helicopters and mules were brought in to deliver aid and get to those who couldn't get out. Strangers became friends in supply lines. God moved through the hands of linemen and nurses, in the meals cooked by church members. We were reminded that the body of Christ is not confined by walls or steeples. It mobilizes. It bears burdens. It shows up. And in this long season of loss and recovery, God whispers something holy: that hope does not come from circumstances. It comes from community. It comes from Christ.

As Paul wrote, *“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair... Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”* (2 Corinthians 4:8–9, 16, NIV).

Hurricane Helene swept through Western North Carolina and left behind a path of destruction whose impact is still unfolding in our community and will be etched in Appalachia history. Now, one year later, the landscape tells two stories. Some homes have been rebuilt, businesses reopened, and routines reestablished. But others still bear the weight of the storm – damaged buildings, lost income, memories washed away in the flood. Some families are still displaced. There are small-town businesses still trying to find their footing. At times, it feels like the rest of the world has moved on, while we remain in the long, slow work of recovery. We need business. We need support. We still need prayer. We need to be remembered. And yet, through it all, there is a stubborn thread of hope. We press on. As pharmacists. As believers. As neighbors. There is resilience in every boarded-up window that's being reopened, in every neighbor helping another. There is care, community, and quiet strength – Appalachia strong. Healing looks different for everyone, and recovery moves at its own pace. It may take years. But the people remain. And so does God.

A closing liturgy:  
“Let our rebuilding be not only of walls and roofs and systems, but of hearts knit together in grace and courage.”<sup>2</sup>

## References

1. American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy. (2025). Oath of a Pharmacist.
2. McKelvey, D. K. (2017). Every Moment Holy, Volume I. Rabbit Room Press.



*Evan Drake, a native of western North Carolina, earned her Doctor of Pharmacy degree from Wingate University School of Pharmacy in 2016. She went on to complete two residencies and a rural health fellowship, where she established a collaborative practice model within a rural health clinic. Evan now serves as an assistant professor at Wingate University School of Pharmacy and maintains an ambulatory care practice site in Columbus, NC. She serves as an advisor for her school's student chapter of CPFI and is actively involved with her local church. Outside of her professional work, she enjoys spending time with family, getting lost in a good book, and exploring the beauty of the North Carolina mountains.*

## That First Step of Obedience Can Lead to Anything...

By Bryan Hammons

In the Spring 2022 issue of *Christianity & Pharmacy*, I was provided the opportunity to write about how the Lord directed my path to get started in medical missions. It all began through a Bible study of Matthew 28, where I learned that I can use my profession as a pharmacist as a tool in spreading the Gospel.

My first mission trip was to Moldova in the spring of 2008 with Global Health Outreach, the mission arm of the Christian Medical and Dental Association. While the majority of my medical mission trips have been to Moldova, I have also traveled to Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

So how do I continue to serve now? It came from a “random” lunch meeting in the summer of 2011. I was in Moldova with the medical team after we had returned to the capital city of Chişinău for some rest and relaxation before returning home. Our in-country missionary contact introduced the team to his American friend who was in Moldova as part of another mission team. While we were sharing lunch in a small café, we both remarked how there appeared to be a multitude of Gospel ministries but it appeared to be very “siloed”... in other words, there were too many missionaries with their head down and working hard,