

Riding out the Storm

HURRICANE MELISSA CATEGORY 5



Ever ride out a hurricane before? Me neither, til last month. The power of such a storm is an incredible thing to experience, and while it was educational, I would be content to never do it again. Had initial predictions proven true, St. Mary Parish would now look like much of the country to the west. We were spared much of the devastation, but our communities were not left unscathed. TEAMS properties received little damage, save loss of power and water, so we were still able to host our November J-Team.

Because we have solar panels, we were able to have limited power during the day and throughout most of the night. Our stove is propane, so our staff could still cook hot meals

for the team. Because of our water storage tanks, we were able to provide drinking water, and when the city water returned, we were able to provide showers as well. We were thankful that 12 of the original team of 22 people were still able to participate.

J-Teams are made up of three parts: Medical, Construction, and Kids/Youth Ministry. We were able to treat 324 patients, hand out 1411 prescriptions, help renovate/rebuild a home for a blind man, and minister to children throughout the week in a school, at the clinics, and at TFA (our kids/youth ministry). Below are testimonials and descriptions of some of the roles of our J-Teamers from this November J-Team.



Melissa Damage Report

Many have asked how our properties fared through Hurricane Melissa. While much of the Western part of the island suffered much devastation, Melissa's impact on St. Mary was much less, so our properties came out fairly unscathed other than the loss of a few trees. However, Melissa revealed a number of things for us about our properties:

- 1. Solar Power is a lifesaver** – without it we could not have hosted our November J-Team. Had it been upgraded we could have hosted better, thankfully our team was gracious. Therefore, we are looking to upgrade our solar on TEAMS House and add solar to the Residence.
- 2. Our small leaks in the roof at the Residence** have turned into many large leaks in the roof. Therefore, the Residence requires a roof renovation along with an overall facelift of the rest of the exterior: patching, fixing, repainting.
- 3. Our Relief Team brought a suitcase generator** with them which proved invaluable. Therefore, we are looking to purchase a couple more as back-ups for major appliances for when power inevitably goes out again.



ENCOURAGER Brent Shick

We are very intentional about talking to everyone that comes to clinic. We try to make a connection through which we can communicate our love and compassion for them as well as God's love and the gospel. We offer them the Daily Bread devotional, ask if we can pray with them, and if they have any specific requests we can pray about for them.

This trip, I believe we made better connections because they knew it was difficult for us to get here and even with just half a team we were able to meet the needs of all who came. We are especially blessed by those who share themselves and their lives with us. Jamaican people are a resilient people.



KIDS/YOUTH MINISTRY Debbi Harley

When Hurricane Melissa tore through Jamaica, the November J-Team was nearly cancelled. The team was greatly altered. Timing changed, supplies were questionable, expectations were lowered. Those of us who made it to St. Mary after the storm were determined to join our Jamaican friends to do what we always do.



After much effort, the team began to arrive on Sunday. We quickly realized St. Mary Parish had received some devastation. Trees had fallen on roads

and houses. Roofs were damaged and gone. There was no electricity and limited water. Food was mostly still available, and fuel may or may not be there when you would drive into the station. On Monday we visited our contacts at larger ministries and government offices. They shared about their efforts to send help to the southwest part of the island. They appreciated that we had still come and were checking on our area. We served our community, we loved on our friends, encouraged our fellow servants, gave what we could, met with patients, built a house, and taught the children.

With all the resources that are gone or limited in St. Mary Parish, November 2025 J-Team and the prayers and support that came with us to Jamaica, were among the first resources to be restored, freeing up others with resources more suited to the greater needs to focus where they are needed. God has called us to serve here. We didn't make the greatest, immediate impact that week. We obeyed God. We were where He wanted, when He wanted. And as always, at the end, we thanked Him for letting us be even a small part of His big plan.

NURSE Rachel Sullivan

When I first started coming to Jamaica a few years ago, I remember being intimidated by the thought of serving in a completely different environment. By the end of the first trip, I was amazed at how comfortable I was at each clinic and how quickly God had calmed my fears. The patients were understanding and kind. They were grateful for the opportunity to be served, and showed me grace as I found my footing. After six trips, I can confidently say that God had a perfect plan in place when He sent me down for the first time, and my passion for serving has grown tremendously. I have built life-long friendships with not only other people from J-Teams, but also the people that live in this country.

This past November J-Team was more challenging as it took place shortly after Hurricane Melissa. Without knowing if the trip would happen, I remember praying that God would take control and only send the team if he could use us. After overcoming numerous cancelled flights, the team arrived and immediately got to work. If there's one thing I took away from this trip, it's how each person continued to state that God is faithful, even in the midst of a devastating situation. They were grateful to be served in any way possible and were willing to occasionally wait longer than usual due to the circumstances. While we faced several limitations, such as lack of power, water, and time to prepare for the week ahead, God used our willingness to serve and continued to show up each day. Although this last week was not easy, I believe that God's plan was bigger and He remained faithful to us.



PHARMACIST Katie Hoffman

When I was given the opportunity to serve as a pharmacist for vulnerable communities in Jamaica, I immediately felt God's calling. Just days before our departure, Hurricane Melissa struck the island, leaving devastation and even greater need behind. Travel, power, and water all became uncertain, but I trusted that if God wanted us there, He would make a way. And He did.



Before the trip, the administration team worked to complete all the necessary paperwork so I could safely and legally serve as a pharmacist. Once in Jamaica, we spent time counting and preparing medications and organizing supplies to make our time at the clinics as efficient as possible. Everyone, whether on the medical team or not, pitched in to prepare medications. It was truly a team effort. I served under the guidance of the regular pharmacist, who graciously trained me and helped me quickly adapt to the drug formulary.

Each morning began with team devotions and prayer, centering our hearts on the true reason we were there, to be the hands and feet of Jesus. At the clinics, our pharmacy team worked alongside the doctors and nurses to ensure that nothing was missed. We double-checked doses, clarified instructions, and took special care with pediatric medications. Each patient received counseling about their prescriptions, and I cherished the opportunity to meet them personally. We faced unique challenges, such as working without power and lacking refrigeration for certain medicines, yet God provided wisdom and creativity so that every patient received safe and effective care.

As my first mission trip, this experience showed me God's faithfulness in unforgettable ways. The love, teamwork, and hospitality of everyone involved strengthened my faith and confirmed my calling to serve. I returned home humbled, grateful, and more certain than ever that when we step out in obedience, God moves mountains and changes hearts—including our own.

BUILDER Herb Huff

Being one of the builders on a J-team is a truly transforming experience. To think that a liveable home can be built in less than 5 days for about \$8,000 is simply mind-boggling. The local contractor Omar, is quite skilled and together with his young apprentices has developed a process for constructing these J-team houses efficiently and with a predetermined set of materials, all of which fit on a heavy-duty, extended cab truck with a 10ft bed.



Each day starts with prayer. The truck is unloaded at the building site the first morning. I try to help with the unloading as much

as I can, but I let the young guys do the heavy lifting. I do a lot of measuring and cutting of lumber the first couple of days and help lift the walls so they can be plumbed and stabilized. Occasionally, I pound some nails with a framing hammer or set some screws with a screw gun, and I have done a lot of painting. It is amazing how everything comes together with each person doing their part.

At the end of each day, materials that were not used are reloaded onto the truck. On Friday afternoon, we do a house dedication with the recipient, the entire J-team and many others who happen to be at the ministry house. The dedication consists of prayer, a wooden cross (signed by the builders), a new Bible (signed by the whole J-team) and the presentation of door keys to the house recipient. There are lots of smiles and happy faces on J-team members, as well as tears of joy and thankfulness on the part of the recipient.

PROVIDER Linda Echevarria

My first experience with Teams was in my last year of residency through a presentation during the Grand Rounds lecture. With my previous experience on medical mission trips, there were several differences I noted in the presentation that was unique to this group. The first being the Team had established a partnership with several churches in the area to hold clinics every 3 months which was important for patients with chronic illnesses to be seen regularly. Secondly, the emphasis on sharing the love of Jesus for His people using the gifts we were given. This is strengthened by the devotionals and prayer time we collectively participate in every morning before heading to the clinic. It has been 15 years since



that first trip and I am drawn back to Jamaica every year because of the relationships formed and the joy of seeing myself and others mature spiritually.

This November J-Team proved to be especially difficult with the damage caused by Hurricane Melissa just days before our arrival. I am thankful for the friends and family that prayed for the people of Jamaica and the provisions for travel, food, power and water. A special thank you for my 5th grade Sunday school class that prayed over me before and during my trip, you are such great prayer warriors. Although our crew was a little smaller than previous J-Teams, it was awesome to see how God provided just what we needed with the help of two Jamaican physicians who assisted me in seeing patients in the clinics and just the right amount of medications and supplies. Despite our challenges, I was encouraged by the testimonies of the patients in clinic of neighbor helping neighbor and the expressions of joy of how they saw God provide and protect in the midst and after the storm.

Last-minute Relief Team

Following the November J-Team we were able to host a 9-member Relief Team: Sara Hentzel, Mark Grittmann, Justin Porter, Autumn Siedenburg, Mark Freeman, Larry Wiggins, Adam Wiggins, and Ken and Rachel Kristiansen. These folks were a Godsend, enabling us to meet some immediate needs which were the result of the Hurricane. Thank you to the many who made generous donations to help our community recover from Hurricane Melissa. With these funds we were able to purchase food and building supplies. The Relief Team was able to carry out 4 food distributions to 4 communities beyond our normal monthly food distribution enabling us to help 280 individuals/ families in St. Mary. While food was being distributed, this group was also able to help with house repairs for 6 individuals/ families in our community. They also enabled us to assess many other housing situations which our Jamaican partners on the ground are continuing to help restore since the team returned to the States.



J-Team Openings

OPENINGS	FEB 7-15, 2026	MAY 2-10, 2026	AUG 1-9, 2026	NOV 7-15, 2026
3 Providers	☑☑☐	☑☐☐	☐☐☐	☑☐☐
2 Nurses	☑☑	☑☑	☑☐	☑☐
3 Pharmacists	☑☑☑	☑☐☐	☑☑☐	☑☐☐
1 Clinic Clerks	☑	☑	☐	☐
3-5 Builders	☑☑☑☑	☐☐☐☐☐	☑☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐☐
3 Kids/Youth Min.	☑☑☑	☐☐☐	☑☐☐☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐
1-2 Encouragers	☑☑	☑☑	☑☐	☑☐

Meet Jolene



Our 3-month-old newest member of T4MM. Our other dog, Liz, has a new spring in her step and is loving having an adopted little one to raise and train.



Hurricane Melissa 2025

by John Heater

We arrived last Tuesday
In time to prepare
For our next J-Team
Soon to be in the air

But news of Melissa
Slowly started to flow
Watch out for flooding
And the winds that will blow

The rhetoric increased
This storm will make history
Devastation is sure
How much, is the mystery

Melissa reminds us
Of Ivan and Gilbert
Don't take her lightly
Or with trouble flirt

Melissa is coming
She's barreling down
On little Jamaica
Surely she'll drown

Our friends back home
Are asking with dread
If we are prepared
For what is ahead

We get hourly briefings
From many who fret
Which don't seem to match
What we see quite yet

On Friday, friends and neighbors
Are saying to relax
We've seen too many come
And seen too many pass

The problem lies down south
At the bottom, not the top
By the time she gets to us
The worst of it will stop

Don't worry about your dwelling
For all will be just fine
No need to be too drastic
Just do what I do to mine

And if we're wrong, they chuckle
We'll talk again next week
When we will know for certain
What havoc she did wreak

It's Friday, but Sunday's a-comin'
My how things do change
No longer calm and even tempered
How different the emotions range

Melissa she's a-comin'
Her voice has begun to call
She's just around the corner
And soon will make landfall

Our first friend calls
Then shows up at our gate
We must get to work
We've received an update

Take down the back awning
Board up the downstairs
To avoid all the things
That create nightmares

Our second friend then calls
A little panic do I hear
As she tells us they are working
To protect all they hold dear

Are we good, she does ask
Is there anything we need
And we say we're taking care
To make us safe indeed

Now our friends are all back home
All prepared and without fear
As we sit here waiting patiently
For Melissa to appear

Monday now has come
And still we await
For all her destruction
Which she will create

We sit and we pray
And we choose not to fear
For God has directed
That we should be here

OVER →

For such a time as this
Is what now comes to mind
What God has in store for us
Is what we soon shall find

Perhaps all is well
Our J-Team arrives
Plan A continues
Our community thrives

Or all is not well
The team doesn't fit
Forcing us to adjust
But never to quit

Changing our focus
Pursuing Plan B
Creating a team
To meet the new need

Which plan will it be
We really don't know
We're waiting on Melissa
The belle of the show

She lingers down south
Picking up speed
Predicted to turn right
For her dastardly deed

Will she play nice
Or havoc will she wreak
We soon will find out
By the end of the week

It's 2am Tuesday
We have no more power
I wear a CPAP
So I know the exact hour

Our thoughts are Aha
The predictors were right
They guessed the right hour
She'd land in the night

But when morning did break
Birds were still in their nest
For Melissa kept drifting
Towards Negril to the west

The predictions now have shifted
To exit through Trelawny Parish
Instead of right through us
Lessening our chances to perish

Tropical storm conditions
Are better than hurricane
But we are still expecting
Lots of wind and lots of rain

To our friends south and west
It looks to be really bad
For ourselves we are happy
But for them we're really sad

Melissa finally landed
At 12:45
Entering at New Hope
Northeast she did drive

Outside the wind blew
Like never before
It blew through the house
A vase crashed to the floor

We cannot lie
To our throats rose a lump
And each billowing wind
Caused our hearts to jump

Then came the good news
At 4 she was gone
From land in Trelawny
To the sea beyond

We still feel the sting
Of the whip of her tail
But hope springs eternal
That we shall prevail

So for now, good night
And sleep well everyone
For tomorrow we hope
All we'll see is the sun

The sun has come out
We are now on the run
Our friends need our help
The work has begun

THE QUARTERLY UPDATE FROM

TEAMS for MEDICAL MISSIONS

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Vital Signs

DECEMBER 2025



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HEARTBEAT

by John Heater



Thank you,
Thank you,
Thank you! It
was a
comfort to
hear from so
many that
you were
praying for
us during

Hurricane Melissa and that you were willing and available to help. Your generous financial gifts to help our dear friends in Jamaica were greatly appreciated and spoke volumes to our Jamaican community. Your concern for us personally warmed our hearts and your prayers encouraged us as we waited for Melissa to make landfall. The Relief Team was not a surprise,

because we know your hearts, but greatly appreciated, and your presence was both a comfort to us and a testimony to our community of how much Jesus loves our little patch of paradise in St. Mary Parish. While the worst of the devastation took place to the West of us, our community suffered its share of destruction and disruption. Please continue to pray for our community and their opportunity to grow closer to the Lord versus move farther away from Him. Pray for our Jamaican partners as they continue to minister in very tangible ways to those hit in our area. And pray for those worst hit areas to the West - it will be a long time before things return to normal.

If you are looking for a way to participate with us in Jamaica, we would love to have you join us - in prayer, in giving, in joining a team. Our ministries continue. The need has only increased. Jamaicans still need to know Jesus and learn what it means to be a follower of Jesus. We need your help and we treasure your support and encouragement. Thank you for loving us. Thank you for loving our Jamaican friends. Thank you for loving Jesus and choosing to be His hands and feet.

Keep lookin' up,
John and Linda