

Nederland church marks new beginning in new sanctuary

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By Elizabeth Staples

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NEDERLAND—Hurricane Rita destroyed the facility of First Baptist Church in Nederland, but it also reinforced the importance of unity among the congregation.

Winds from the Sept. 24, 2005, hurricane stripped the roofs off all the church's buildings. The steeple fell through the roof, allowing water into the sanctuary and ruining the carpet. Most of the pews, the steeple and carpet in other buildings needed to be replaced. The building suffered nearly \$1.5 million damage.



Pastor
David
Higgs
prays with
a couple
who joined
First
Baptist
Church in
Nederland.

The
decision
took place
during the
re-opening
of the
church's
sanctuary.

 [View
a video
clip from
First
Baptist
Nederland
here.](#)

The congregation immediately set to work when the city re-opened after the hurricane. The church rented a tent from the Ohio State Fair and met in a parking lot until it could move its Sunday services into its education building.

“Church is the people of God coming together for a common belief, to trust him, to serve him, and to go out and do the things that he would have us to

do,” Deacon Bubba Martin said.

Although there was much to do in the restoration process, the project inspired members of the church and people in the community to work together and rebuild.

“People have a tendency to come together in a time of need and a time of disaster,” Deacon Bruce Stracener said. “We saw different groups of people coming together that probably otherwise never would have met one another, never would have worked together. It’s actually been a time of building good relationships—not only with one another, but also depending more on God.”

During the intervening months, many changes have taken place at First Baptist Church. More than 150 volunteers came together from the area to help restore the church.

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“What God takes away, he replenishes twofold. And someday we’ll look over our shoulder at this and thank God for what he has done for our

church and for our community,” Stracener said.

The congregation was filled with emotion as it anticipated its first time to see the sanctuary restored with new colors and new design. The renovations not only impacted the church, but also the community as a whole.

First Baptist Church “is a lighthouse,” Martin said. “It stands out in this community as a place where people are worshipping God.”

“Our preacher has called us to a time of prayer that we would all be in one accord, that we would all lay our own agendas aside to pray and put our focus to what God wants our focus to be, and that’s to win our community for Christ,” said Phyllis Mosely, a member of First Baptist Church.

The church “is on Main Street. It’s been here. It’s well known, and that’s our vision—that we would win the lost people of Nederland for Christ,” she said.

Help from the Baptist General Convention of Texas brought hope to First Baptist Church in Nederland, as well as much of Southeast Texas, said Montie Martin, executive director of Golden Triangle Baptist Association.

The prayers and support from Texas Baptists have played a huge role in rebuilding the community.

“We would not be opening this sanctuary within eight months if it had not been for the help of Texas Baptists,” said Pastor David Higgs.

“The BGCT came with monies and other support for our people. They also supplied some relief efforts. They came with a chainsaw crew and also made funding available to people who needed funds to buy food and clothing and things of this nature.”

Even though the sanctuary has been repaired, still other buildings are in

the process of being restored, Higgs said. It may take years to restore all that has been lost, but the sanctuary, the community and the ways God has met needs have brought hope to the congregation.

“The greatest thing Texas Baptists can do is to continue to lift us up in prayer,” Montie Martin said. “When the state of Texas lifts us up to the Lord in prayer, there is no greater thing they could possibly do.”

Rebuilding the sanctuary marks a “new beginning” for First Baptist Church, its members and its community, Higgs said.

“I have truly begun to realize that with God, nothing is impossible. When we came back from the hurricane, everything looked impossible. It looked bleak. Everything was in ruin. And now we see firsthand that truly everything is possible with God. He truly can make beauty out of ashes, and he is a God of restoration.”

[View a video clip from First Baptist Nederland here.](#)

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