

# After hurricane, churches tap technology to stay connected

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ALEXANDRIA, La. (BP)—Louisiana Baptist pastors employed social media to reach out to congregations they had urged stay home out of safety concerns in the face of Hurricane Barry— with dining room tables, home offices and vacant worship centers serving as pulpits.

Stewart Holloway, senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Pineville, said it marked the first time in 25 years as a minister he cancelled a Sunday morning worship service.

Still, Holloway, speaking via Facebook Live from his dining room table alongside his wife Rebecca, quipped he was thankful technology allowed his home to serve as a “multi-site campus of our church.”

Holloway told the congregation that storms such as Barry remind Christ’s followers what is most important in life and also of God’s power.

“As you sit at home today eating your hurricane snacks and thinking about all the cleanup you will have to do later this week, for now be glad that you are able to focus on what’s most important and on the power of God,” Holloway said.

“Here’s what we encourage you to do now. Whether you are gathered with family or friends or by yourself when the webcast ends, take a moment to talk about your faith journey and how creation points you to God.”

Holloway also asked the congregation to pray for first responders, electrical crews and disaster relief workers.

“They will be busy for weeks throughout our state,” he said. “We also pray

for those who have experienced damage to their homes, businesses and churches.”

## **Prayers requested, gospel presented**

Jacob Crawford, pastor of Life Point Community Church in Mansura, speaking from his home office via Facebook, took prayer requests and delivered his Sunday morning message.

“We wanted to provide an opportunity for our church family to gather together remotely,” Crawford told the *Baptist Message* of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. “It’s such a blessing to have the technology to do this.

“It was neat to see their responses as the sermon progressed. This showed me the importance of utilizing more social media and technology.”

From a vacant worship center, Kevin Colson, pastor of Grace Community Baptist Church in Iota, led Facebook viewers to pray for those affected by Barry. He said he initially was disappointed to cancel the church’s morning worship service. However, he realized the advantage of using the internet like this, a first for the church.

“God’s word went out and we reached over 1,000 viewers,” Colson said. “God is good.”

Josh Morea, senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Ferriday, also live-streamed his message from inside the church’s empty worship center.

“Social media allowed us to stay connected on a rare Sunday morning when the congregation couldn’t gather as normal,” Morea told the *Baptist Message*. “I’m grateful for any means of sharing the gospel. It was a great blessing to know that we could fellowship over God’s word together while we were physically separated.”