

# Man rescued from burning car after crashing into church

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MACCLESFIELD, N.C. (BP)—First responders and members of a North Carolina church are being hailed as heroes after they helped pull a man to safety from a burning vehicle after the car's driver crashed through the front of the church building on Wednesday, March 8.



A vehicle slammed through the wall of a prayer room adjacent to the foyer at Webbs Chapel Baptist Church in Macclesfield, N.C. (BP Photo)

Witnesses say the driver apparently lost consciousness and barreled through a stop sign at a T-intersection in front of Webbs Chapel Baptist Church in Macclesfield at approximately 4 p.m.

The vehicle slammed through the wall of a prayer room adjacent to the church's foyer. Moments later, the car caught fire inside the building with the driver trapped inside.

No one was at the church at the time of the incident, but a passerby who

stopped to assist was soon joined by the church's pastor and other members who live near the church as news of the accident quickly spread.

Those initial people on the scene worked frantically to rescue the driver trapped inside while waiting for first responders to arrive. Their rescue efforts were complicated, however, by limited access to the vehicle and smoke that filled the room where the car was lodged.

Firefighters used a brush truck to pull the vehicle from the building which allowed a member of the N.C. Highway Patrol to pull the driver to safety through the passenger side door. Fire crews were then able to extinguish the flames on the vehicle and inside the church building.

The driver of the vehicle was treated at the scene and transported to a local hospital, where he remains hospitalized but is expected to make a full recovery.

The highway patrol officer who responded to the incident and pulled the driver from the car is also a member of the church, according to Pastor Stephen Duncan.

"They did some heroic things to save him," said longtime church member Joesy Harrell, who was among the first people to arrive at the scene along with Duncan.

## **'Crashed into a place of hope'**

Duncan said he was able to pray with the driver before he was transported to the hospital by ambulance. The pastor visited him in the hospital the day after the crash and said he plans to continue to visit and minister to him.

"I told him that he crashed into a place of hope," Duncan said. "We're praying hard for him."

After the crash, church leaders shifted that evening's scheduled activities to the church's family life center, where members came together to pray and process the events of the day.

Duncan said he shared from Haggai 2:9 with those who gathered, which says, "'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the LORD Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the LORD Almighty."

"We know that God is going to use this," Duncan said. "We are going to move forward and still do ministry. The gospel hasn't been prevented from going forward because of this incident. I'm excited to see how God is going to turn this for his glory."



Webbs Chapel Baptist Church in Macclesfield, N.C., meet for worship in the church's family life center. (BP Photo)

The church will conduct worship services in the family life center for the foreseeable future, Duncan said. The accident completely destroyed the prayer room and caused extensive fire and smoke damage to the sanctuary. Although initial damage assessments have begun, the full extent of the damage, along with the cost and timeline for repairs, won't be known for several more days, he said.

Duncan said he has been encouraged by the show of support he has received from the community, other churches and ministry leaders. He asked for ongoing prayers for the driver of the crash and for the church as it moves forward.

“We know God is going to be faithful,” Duncan said. “We are going to move forward.”

*Chad Austin writes for Baptist State Convention of North Carolina Communications.*□