

Shreveport church focuses prayer on daughter of church staff member

July 14, 2009

JACKSON, Miss. (ABP) — Five of six victims still hospitalized after a deadly July 12 church-bus accident were improving two days after the wreck, but the next 72 hours remained critical for a church staff member's daughter suffering severe head injuries.

Greg Hunt, senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Shreveport, La., said doctors at University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson, Miss., were still waiting until brain swelling goes down before they can determine the extent of trauma to Maggie Lee Henson, daughter of the church's associate pastor for emerging ministries, and how she might respond to treatment.



Maggie Lee
Henson

"She's the one we are most in need of prayer for," Hunt said July 14 from the hospital in Jackson. Hunt said doctors had gotten her brain pressure under control and are monitoring her condition.

Henson, a seventh grader at First Baptist Church School, was one of three passengers ejected from and trapped under a church bus carrying a church group to a youth camp in Georgia that flipped and rolled three times after a blowout on an interstate near the Alabama-Mississippi state line. One

youth, 14-year-old Brandon Ugarte, was pronounced dead on arrival after being airlifted to the hospital in Jackson.

Of the 17 youth and six adults injured in the wreck, six remained hospitalized on July 14.

Hunt said one of the youth, Lauren Murchison, was doing well after surgery July 13 to fix two breaks in her femur, facial fractures and other injuries. He said Sarah Smith, who was transported to Jackson with neck fractures, could go home as early as Wednesday.

He said three people hospitalized nearer to the crash site in Meridian, Miss., including two adult sponsors, were also improving, and that the teenager, Chase Johnson, would be released soon.

Hunt [announced](#) in May that he was resigning at the end of August as pastor of First Baptist Church to devote full time to a seminar and consulting ministry he started in 2001.

Hunt declined to discuss whether the tragedy might alter those plans, but he did pledge that the associate pastor "can focus all his energy on being a father and being a husband" and that youth minister Jason Matlack would be allowed to recover from serious injuries he sustained in the crash.

"I am present and accounted for, and I'm the senior pastor of First Baptist," Hunt said.

"This church needs me to be fully present and accounted for and I intend to be," he said. "We're going to make sure that everything is under control and good solid leadership remains unbroken."

The family of Maggie Lee Henson set up a [page](#) on an Internet service called Caring Bridge to consolidate updates on her condition. Her father said on Facebook early July 14 that the top priority now is for brain

swelling to go down.

First Baptist Church held a midday prayer [vigil](#) July 14 for Henson and other victims and their families.

-Bob Allen is senior writer for Associated Baptist Press.

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