

Prayer and neighborliness key to Sanderson's recovery

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In the six months after tornadoes struck Sanderson, residents of the small West Texas town have “pulled together” and made strides toward rebuilding, Pastor Mike Ellis said.

Ellis, pastor of First Baptist Church in Sanderson, credited two factors in the successful recovery and rebuilding efforts—“neighbors helping neighbors” and the prayers of God’s people around the state.

The June 2 tornadoes destroyed or seriously damaged multiple buildings in town, but the First Baptist Church facility escaped without even a broken window.

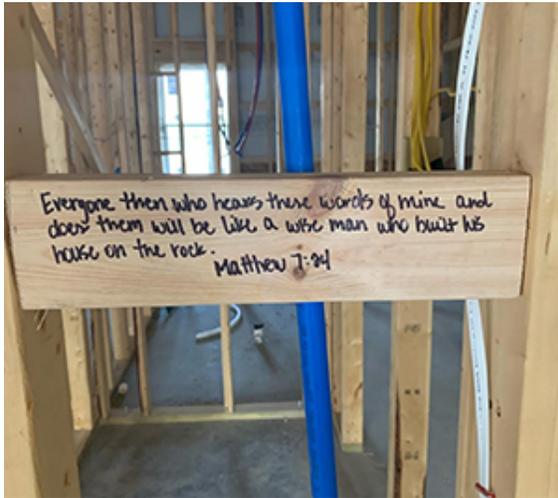


Jessica and Chase McCrory, members of First Baptist Church in Sanderson, stand outside their home that was hit by a tornado on June 2. (Photo / David Vela / Texas Baptists)

Jessica and Chase McCrory and their two young sons lost their home to the

tornado, but they are “on the road to recovery,” Ellis said.

The McCrory family—members of First Baptist Church—have been working with their insurance company and a contractor not just to rebuild the home they lost, but to construct the home their young family dreamed of having.



Before the contractors hung drywall in their home, the McCrory family of Sanderson invited members of their church to use permanent markers to write Bible verses and other words of blessing on the boards between studs. (Courtesy Photo)

The couple enlisted a contractor to build a barndominium—a structure blending traditional barn architecture with modern living areas—set back 10 feet further from the road than their previous home had been.

“Chase McCrory would be the first to say: ‘God is good. God had a plan,’” Ellis said.

When McCrory decided to install all of the insulation in the house himself

as a cost-cutting measure, volunteers from First Baptist Church helped him, Ellis noted.

Before the contractors hung drywall in their home, the family invited members of the church to use permanent markers to write Bible verses and other words of blessing on the boards between studs, he added.

Ellis serves First Baptist Church bivocationally, working as an electrical, plumbing and building contractor.

As the self-described “only licensed electrician in town,” he and his grandson worked 16-hour days for the first month after the tornado, helping their neighbors restore power to their homes.

“My grandson had been talking about wanting to become an electrician. I think he may have reconsidered,” Ellis said.

The local coffee shop plans its grand reopening in two weeks, and other businesses in town either have reopened or plan to in the near future, he noted.

Ellis, who served in “tornado alley” during his 20 years working in the Texas Panhandle and Oklahoma, had extensive experience with natural disasters and was trained in emergency management.

“In all that time, I had never seen a group of people who jumped in and started helping each other quite like the folks here,” he said. “Everybody pulled together. It’s neighbors helping neighbors.”

In the days immediately after the tornado hit, members of First Baptist Church worked side-by-side with volunteers from other local churches to provide meals to families affected by the tornadoes.

The Buena Vista Independent School District in Imperial sent two busloads of student volunteers to help clear debris on a Saturday soon after the

tornado struck Sanderson.

“We had people from as far away as Stephenville who sent trailers filled with building materials,” Ellis said. “And people are still helping one another.”

Ellis credits the resilience of local residents in large part to the prayer support they received from Christians throughout Texas.

“Those prayers were felt,” he said. “They’re still being felt, and the answers to those prayers are still being seen.

“God’s grace has been on us. He was with us through it all.”