

Retired Texas Baptist chaplain offers disaster relief near Baton Rouge

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DENHAM SPRINGS, La.—As he stood in the middle of a flood-ravaged neighborhood in Denham Springs, La., retired Brig. Gen. Bob Page summed up the devastation in a single word—“overwhelming.”

In his 42 years with the U.S. Air Force, Page never saw anything like it, he noted.

“It’s deeply disturbing and breaks my heart,” said Page, former deputy chief of chaplains and a Texas Baptist-endorsed chaplain.

According to the local sheriff’s office, 75 percent of the houses in Livingston Parish—east of Baton Rouge—are a total loss, leaving thousands of families displaced. Only 21 percent of the homes were covered by flood insurance.

The flooding started Aug. 11, as a stationary weather system poured more than two feet of rain on the area in less than 24 hours. By the following day, the Amite River overflowed its banks and rose to levels never before seen, sending water over streets and highways and into homes, businesses, schools and hospitals.



This young woman and her mother brought donated supplies to a collection site River Pointe Church in Richmond established. Bob Page and Curt Braun delivered a trailer loaded with cleaning supplies, toiletries, food and water to Doyle Elementary School in Livingston, La., where volunteers organized the supplies and distributed them to 120 families. (Photos courtesy of Bob Page)As soon as highways re-opened, needed supplies started pouring into the stricken area. [River Pointe Church](#) in Richmond, southwest of Houston, filled a trailer with food and supplies from an American Red Cross list of requested items. The church sent Page and another River Pointe member, Curt Braun, to Livingston Parish,.

For Page, it was personal. He grew up in the Livingston Parish community of Walker. His sister, cousins, nieces and nephews lost all their possessions in the deluge that brought five feet of water into their homes. The nursing home where his mother lived was destroyed, but she was evacuated with the other residents before the Amite River's swift current overflowed its

banks and came racing through the nursing home up to the ceiling. Page's entire family survived the disaster.

As volunteers distributed supplies to more than 120 families, Page and Braun went to work at a home in Denham Springs helping to clean out the mud and tear out damaged sheetrock and insulation.

"As we worked, the pile of trash by the road grew into a mountain," Page said. "Everything was lost. Looking down the road, it was the same for all the neighbors I could see. The contents of every house was piled on the side of the road."



"We saw a mountain of furniture, appliances, carpet, wallboard and insulation in front of almost every home we passed," Bob Page said. Multiple organizations are working in southern Louisiana, but more needs to be done, he insisted.

"It will take years to rebuild," he said. "I know God will bring the people and resources to help. ... Pick an area to pray for, send supplies, financial gifts or teams. They need our help."

Page made a special appeal to chaplains.

"I ask my chaplain family to lead their congregations and teams to pray for Louisiana, give to organizations that are working there, and send teams to help where you can," he said.

Page plans additional trips to the area in the weeks ahead. For more

information on how to be involved, contact him at brpage1@aol.com.

Eric Whitmore is associate endorser for chaplains with the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

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