

Updated: Storm damages Garland church, but no injuries sustained

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GARLAND—Severe storms that swept through the Dallas area toppled the steeple and ripped air conditioning units from the roof of [South Garland Baptist Church](#) but caused no injuries.



A storm that swept through eastern Dallas County toppled the steeple at South Garland Baptist Church. (PHOTO/Diane Camp) High winds and heavy rain hit Garland around 7:15 p.m. Aug. 13. In addition to demolishing the church's steeple and air conditioning, winds also damaged the roof, downed a utility line, blew the glass out of an elevated sign, felled several trees and blew heavy metal

bleachers from an adjoining recreation area onto the church's parking lot.

"While it is difficult to look at and think about, I am grateful to God that no one was injured. Minutes before the storm hit the area, there were multiple people at the church preparing for events," Deacon Chair Michael Cole said.

A group of teenagers had gathered at the church but already moved to a party at a member's home before the storm. Similarly, members of a committee had assembled at the church before going to a remote assignment.

Two people were inside the church building when the storm hit—Joyce Still, the director of children's ministries and interim preschool director, and her daughter, Rachaele. Both sought shelter in a downstairs room, and neither was injured.

Until the electricity was restored and the city declared the building safe for occupancy, the church would not be able to use its facility, Pastor Larry Davis said.

However, the congregation met outside on the parking lot for prayer on Wednesday evening. Davis and members thanked God for protection of lives and asked guidance for the immediate future.

On the Sunday morning after the storm, 240 worshippers gathered outdoors again—this time meeting in a courtyard between the church's old and new fellowship halls.

Although several neighboring congregations offered to make facilities available, South Garland chose to meet outside its damaged building as a sign of "solidarity, unity and our sense of family," Youth Minister Derek Hutter told the group. Standing on a makeshift platform next to the remains of the church's bent spire, Hutter noted leaders' desire to "worship

one more time under this steeple.”

With the sound of a neighbor’s chainsaw in the background, Davis preached from Psalm 118, echoing the psalmist’s call to give thanks to God, “For he is good; his love endures forever.”

Davis reminded the congregation God displayed his power and his character in the violent storm by protecting members from harm.

“God is good because it is his nature. His goodness is determined by his character. God is love,” he said. “His love expresses itself in mercy, faithfulness, grace and goodness—even in the midst of all our trials.”

God’s people should remember his love begins before they even are aware of it, he emphasized.

“This ground was hallowed long before the first brick was laid for this building,” Davis said.

At the end of the service, Dickie Dunn, a church strategist with the Baptist General Convention of Texas, presented South Garland a \$5,000 check from the BGCT.

Editor’s note: The last 10 paragraphs were added after the article originally was posted.