

# TBM continues disaster relief in East Texas

May 10, 2017

CANTON—After out-of-town television news crews moved on to other assignments and public attention shifted to other parts of the state, Texas Baptist Men disaster relief volunteers continue work in tornado-ravaged parts of East Texas.

In a little more than a week, they donated nearly 2,400 volunteer hours and made more than 500 ministry contacts in the region.

TBM volunteers distributed more than 3,700 boxes to enable residents to gather and store possessions scattered by the storms, and chaplains had meaningful encounters with at least 130 people.



Texas Baptist Men heavy equipment operators logged 127 volunteer hours as of May 9. (Photo / Ken Camp)As of May 9, TBM chainsaw crews had completed 30 jobs, heavy equipment operators had logged 127 hours, and “blue tarp” crews provided temporary roof coverings for eight homes. Other volunteers supported the work by providing meals, access to showers and laundry service.

“We still have some large jobs to work on,” said Terry Henderson, TBM state disaster relief director. “We brought in more heavy equipment,

because the trees that need to be moved are so large.”

### **Still discovering needs**

Multiple organizations—faith-based and secular—have worked in the region, but on May 5 and 6, TBM assessment teams discovered several areas just outside the Canton city limits that had not been served by other agencies or volunteer organizations.



Texas Baptist Men chainsaw crews likely will continue work in the Canton area another week or two, according to TBM State Disaster Relief Director Terry Henderson. (Photo / Ken Camp) Henderson estimated chainsaw crews will continue their work in the area “at least another week or two.”

John Bell, minister of music and pastoral care at First Baptist Church in Canton, is coordinating ministry to survivors of the tornado, and matching workers to needs still is challenging, he said. Some church members whose homes and property sustained damage are learning hard lessons about what insurance does and does not cover.

“We’re trying to figure out how we can help,” he said.

### **Unforgettable worship**

Members of First Baptist won't soon forget the May 7 worship service.

"It was really an emotional day," Bell said. "As I looked out at the congregation, I was seeing people whose homes had been totally destroyed, and I was supposed to lead them in worship."

An unusually large number attended the 8 a.m. worship service so they could go back to work cleaning up storm damage in the afternoon, he noted.

At the end of the service, worshippers gathered around member families who had lost their homes to pray for them and offer encouragement.

"There were quite a few tears, but they were tears of joy," Bell said. "They knew God's people were there for them and will continue to be there for them."

In addition to serving in East Texas, TBM also sent volunteers to storm-damaged areas in Missouri. An incident-management team went to work in Jefferson City, Mo., and two flood recovery crews began ministry in Neosho, Mo.

### **How to help**

To contribute to TBM disaster relief, click [here](#) or send a check designated "disaster relief" to Texas Baptist Men, 5351 Catron, Dallas 75227.

The Van Zandt County Tornado Relief Fund was established at the Canton branch of the First State Bank in Ben Wheeler. The account number is 4413270.