

TBM offers disaster relief in wake of record flooding along Brazos

June 8, 2016

HOUSTON—When the rain-swollen Brazos River reached a century-high level and spilled out its banks, displacing hundreds of families in communities northwest and southwest of Houston, Texas Baptist Men responded immediately with hot meals.



Spencer Seyb, a disaster relief volunteer from West Conroe Baptist Church, stirs chili in the field kitchen set up on his church's parking lot. (Photo / Ken Camp) At the same time, they mobilized volunteers for wide-ranging cleanup efforts and other ministries to help flood-affected families and individuals.

'A huge, huge help'

"It's a huge, huge help to have these volunteers," Rosenberg Police Chief Dallis Warren said, gesturing toward TBM volunteers working at a field kitchen in the parking lot at First Baptist Church in Rosenberg.

Warren, who directed the local emergency operations center, reported damage assessors confirmed more than 70 homes in Rosenberg sustained water damage, and 192 households were evacuated.

“So many people have been displaced. Some people are staying with friends or family, but many have no way to prepare meals,” he said. “It’s a huge benefit to know they can count on two hot meals each day. It really helps start the recovery process for them. It lets them know there are caring people willing to do a whole lot to help this community get back on its feet.”



Rosenberg Mayor Cynthia McConathy expresses appreciation to Tony Garcia of Bay City, TBM regional director, for the work TBM volunteers are doing in her community. (Photo / Ken Camp) Rosenberg Mayor Cynthia McConathy echoed the same sentiment, reflecting on the contribution of TBM workers and other volunteers.

“Words cannot express what this means,” she said. “It is wonderful how God moves through people and their passions, as these volunteers have the opportunity to be the hands and feet of Jesus.”

State of disaster widespread

On June 1, Gov. Greg Abbott declared a state of disaster in 31 Texas

counties in response to flooding that began before Memorial Day weekend.

TBM disaster relief volunteers prepared about 20,000 meals in their first five days in Rosenberg and Conroe, and they expected demand to continue at a pace of 5,000-plus meals per day for the immediate future.

Responding in Rosenberg



Monica McDougall, a volunteer from Memorial Baptist Church in Temple, works at the field kitchen set up at First Baptist Church in Rosenberg. (Photo / Ken Camp) In Rosenberg, TBM volunteers from Bell Baptist Association set up their field kitchen and other equipment—including a shower and laundry unit from Gambrell Baptist Association—at First Baptist Church.

Together with other TBM volunteers, they prepared meals the American Red Cross delivered to five shelters and to neighborhoods through Fort Bend County and the surrounding area.

John Reid, pastor of First Baptist Church, noted the flood displaced several member families in his congregation, but the degree of damage to homes varied widely.

“If they were close to the Brazos, they were affected,” he said. “When we get to the mud-out phase, we will try to do things at that point to help them.”

West Conroe Baptist Church hub of activity

In Conroe, volunteers set up a field kitchen in the back parking lot at West Conroe Baptist Church, providing meals for up to 16 shelters. They also filled insulated containers with hot food, and American Red Cross workers in up to 12 emergency response vehicles delivered it to disaster-affected neighborhoods.

Volunteers used equipment owned by West Conroe Baptist Church’s missions department, as well as the South Texas food-service unit from Alvin, to prepare meals.



Gary Finley coordinates the field kitchen and emergency food-service operation at West Conroe Baptist Church. (Photo / Ken Camp) Gary Finley, a layman at West Conroe Baptist Church, put into practice skills he learned in his career as an air-traffic controller when he coordinated the extensive food-service operation. Meanwhile, inside the church facilities, members led an already-scheduled Vacation Bible School.

Mud-out crews from Nederland in Golden Triangle Baptist Association and from Harmony-Pittsburg Baptist Association in Northeast Texas were

scheduled to begin work on homes, removing water-damaged drywall and flooring, power-washing walls and disinfecting surfaces.

‘Mold-busters’ at work



TBM Volunteer Chaplain Gerry Boufford talks to a homeowner in the flooded Magnolia Bend area, southeast of Conroe. (Photo /Ken Camp)Raymond and Elaine Barnard from First Baptist Church in Duncanville arrived ahead of the crews to assess needs and schedule cleanup jobs.

“In some homes, there was just a couple of inches of water that seeped up from the floor, and in some, the water was as high as five feet,” he said.

Before the mud-out crews arrived to begin the heavy work, the Barnards and other volunteers with mud-out experience tackled some lighter pressure-washing and disinfecting jobs themselves in the Magnolia Bend area, an isolated community in the woods southeast of Conroe.



Raymond Barnard from First Baptist Church in Duncanville applies disinfectant to the cedar walls of a flood-damaged home southeast of Conroe. (Photo / Ken Camp) As he strapped onto his back a plastic tank filled with disinfectant and checked the nozzle of his spray wand, Barnard quipped: “We’re not the ghostbusters. We’re the mold-busters.”

By June 10, TBM food-service and mud-out workers in Conroe expected to be joined by a mobile shower and laundry unit and a crew of volunteers who would deliver boxes to residents in flood-damaged areas, to help them collect their scattered belongings.

How to help

TBM disaster relief efforts are financed entirely by designated gifts. To give directly to TBM, click [here](#) or mail a check to Texas Baptist Men, 5351 Catron, Dallas, 75227.

In the weeks and months ahead, Texas Baptists’ disaster recovery program—a ministry of the Baptist General Convention of Texas—will begin work in the greater Houston area, focusing particularly on helping underinsured families and individuals who do not qualify for FEMA assistance because they are repeat flood survivors.

To contribute to long-term recovery efforts, mail checks to Texas Baptists' Disaster Recovery, 7557 Rambler Rd., Suite 1100, Dallas 75231-2310 or click [here](#).