

# Texas Baptists' Disaster Recovery mobilizes 450 volunteers

January 13, 2016

ROWLETT—Texas Baptists' Disaster Recovery ministry mobilized 450 volunteers in two weekends to Rowlett and Garland after tornadoes ripped through North Texas Dec. 26.

Volunteers moved bricks, mangled furniture and tree limbs from the disaster zones to the street curbs, working a combined total of 1,100 hours.



Texas Baptists' Disaster Recovery ministry mobilized 450 volunteers—including college students from First Baptist Church in Plano—in two weekends to Rowlett and Garland after tornadoes ripped through North Texas Dec. 26. (Photo / Leah Reynolds) In Rowlett, the city government asked the Baptist General Convention of Texas Disaster Recovery ministry to organize a volunteer reception center at First Baptist Church. Although the BGCT program

traditionally steps in during the long-term recovery phase, leaving immediate disaster relief to trained Texas Baptist Men volunteers, the office accepted the city's request for aid.

"We were approached by the city and Texas Baptist Men with a request to help manage the center, and we were happy to step in and assist in the immediate aftermath," said David Scott, Texas Baptists' Disaster Recovery director. "People wanted to help, but there was no system in place to manage the volunteers. So, we brought our team in to help the city coordinate the efforts."

Volunteers poured into First Baptist Church in Rowlett for a safety orientation and to receive job assignments.

College students from First Baptist Church in Plano assisted Cornelius Rodgers, a resident whose family was home the evening the tornadoes struck. Overcome with gratitude for the assistance, Rodgers recalled events from Dec. 26.

"We prayed and prayed and prayed," he said, explaining he had blanketed himself over his wife and children in the bathtub just seconds before the twister struck their house. Fierce winds and a loud roar surrounded the room as they prayed. When the piercing noise finally stopped, Rodgers looked up to survey the damage.

"I was in shock," he said. "In a thousand years, I never thought there would be a tornado in Rowlett. You just never think it will happen to you."

The tornado ripped away a wall, exposing his children's bedroom. It tore off much of the roof, shattered his company vehicle's windshield and overturned a backyard play set.

"Our home is a total loss. It has to be demolished," Rodgers said.

But before it could be demolished, much of the debris needed to be moved to the curb, a daunting task for one family. That is when volunteers from First Baptist in Plano assisted.

“It’s a blessing,” Rodgers said. “I have never seen anything like this. Many churches have been out here helping the community. It’s a blessing that people will take the time out of their day to help someone in need.”

Texas Baptists’ Disaster Recovery will continue evaluating needs for all of the communities affected by the winter tornadoes to determine how to mobilize volunteers to assist with long-term recovery efforts.

Representatives of the North Dallas Bank of Texas delivered a \$2,500 gift to assist with recovery efforts, such as purchasing building materials.

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](#).

To learn more about Texas Baptists’ Disaster Recovery and discover opportunities to serve, [click here](#).