

Texas Baptists respond after tornadoes hit mid-South

December 14, 2021

GARLAND—When multiple tornadoes ripped through the mid-South, a Dallas-area Baptist congregation partnered with Texas Baptist Men to deliver supplies to help a Hispanic Baptist pastor in Mayfield, Ky., minister to his community.



Pastor Daniel Camp (left) of South Garland Baptist Church gathers for prayer with (left to right) ministry assistant Marcy McLendon, volunteer driver Steven Branch from The Village Church in Flower Mound, Rupert Robbins of Texas Baptist Men, deacon Garold May and student minister Jorge Rivera. TBM transported four generators and various other supplies the Garland church provided to a Hispanic congregation in Mayfield, Ky., after a tornado hit the

community. (Photo / Ken Camp)

Late Friday night Dec. 10, a series of tornadoes swept through Arkansas, Missouri, Tennessee and Kentucky. The longest-tracking tornado, packing wind speeds in excess of 150 mph, originated in Arkansas and appeared to remain on the ground more than 200 miles into Kentucky.

During a Dec. 13 news conference, Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear confirmed 64 deaths in his state due to tornadoes. However, he added, “undoubtedly, there will be more” fatalities, noting 105 people remained unaccounted for at that point.

TBM placed its statewide network of disaster relief volunteers on alert over the weekend, and leaders began working with counterparts in other states on a coordinated response.

David Estevez, who leads the Hispanic ministries at South Garland Baptist Church, and Jorge Rivera, the Garland congregation’s student minister, contacted Jaime Masso, pastor of Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana in Mayfield, Ky., to check on his well-being.



Members of South

Garland Baptist Church donated more than 650 diapers in 24 hours for Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana in Mayfield, Ky., after a tornado hit the community. (Photo / Ken Camp)

Estevez is a longtime friend of Masso, and Rivera had been working with him to plan a student mission trip to Kentucky this summer.

At a regularly scheduled church council meeting on Dec. 12, Estevez and Rivera reported to South Garland Baptist Church leaders about needs in southwestern Kentucky.

Masso was safe, and his church facility was not damaged seriously, but its sponsoring congregation—First Baptist Church in Mayfield—lost most of its buildings, Estevez said.

The American Red Cross and several other organizations were using the Hispanic church's building as its headquarters for relief. Masso was providing shelter in his home for some people affected by the tornado. But like other Mayfield residents, his house lacked electricity and likely would be without utilities for an extended time.

Rivera told the church council a member of South Garland Baptist Church already had offered to loan two generators to Masso. By later Sunday evening, another member offered to let him borrow two more, if they could be transported to Kentucky.

Appeal for donations

At 8 a.m. Monday morning, Pastor Daniel Camp sent an email to members of South Garland Baptist Church reporting on the needs. He appealed for donations of disposable diapers of all sizes and women's hygiene products, along with financial gifts for the Hispanic church in Mayfield.

"By 9 o'clock, we already had received \$1,500," said Marcy McLendon, the church's ministry assistant.



Rupert Robbins of TBM (left) and volunteer driver Steven Branch from The Village Church in Flower Mound, secure generators and other equipment provided by South Garland Baptist Church for a Hispanic church in Mayfield, Ky., to use after a tornado. (Photo / Ken Camp)

Within 24 hours, South Garland Baptist raised \$3,450 and collected more than 650 diapers, assorted feminine hygiene products and other personal items, along with four generators, two filled 5-gallon gasoline containers, assorted extension cords and other supplies.

The church also received an envelope filled with notes of encouragement for the people of Mayfield from students at Conrad High School in Dallas, where Estevez teaches.

In the meantime, the pastor connected with Rupert Robbins, associate director of disaster relief for TBM. Robbins enlisted a driver—Steven Branch, a volunteer from The Village Church in Flower Mound—and TBM provided a truck to transport the donated items to Kentucky.

The loaded truck left the South Garland Baptist Church parking lot at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, a short time after a mobile freezer filled with food left the TBM headquarters in Dallas, bound for Murray, Ky.

Loving ‘in truth and action’

“1 John 3:18 tells believers to love not in words or speech, but in truth and action, and you were exceedingly faithful to that command,” the church’s pastor wrote in a follow-up email to members. “Presented with an opportunity to help those in need, you stepped up in a big way, and I am overwhelmed with pride and gratitude for your generosity.”



Volunteers load a generator onto a pickup truck in the South Garland Baptist Church parking lot. The

Garland church donated supplies for a Hispanic congregation in Mayfield, Ky., after a tornado. Texas Baptist Men transported the equipment and supplies to Kentucky. (Photo / Ken Camp)

He asked members to pray for Branch as he made the trip to Kentucky and for Masso as he and his church ministered in their hard-hit community.

“And let us all give thanks for the privilege of being used by God to help his people,” he concluded.

In addition to helping the Garland church deliver donated items to Mayfield and sending the mobile freezer to support Southern Baptist disaster relief teams already on the ground in Kentucky, TBM also was making final preparation to send chainsaw teams to the disaster sites, TBM Executive Director Mickey Lenamon said on Tuesday morning.

“All our chainsaw teams are on standby to minister, and some of them may deploy as soon as this week,” Lenamon said. “We know the needs are immense, and TBM volunteers are striving to meet them as quickly as possible.”

All other TBM volunteers—emergency food service, shower and laundry, chaplains, asset protection, damage assessors and incident management personnel—remain on alert for later deployment in what likely will be a lengthy relief operation.

To support TBM disaster relief financially, visit tbmtx.org/donate or send a designated check to Texas Baptist Men, 5351 Catron Drive, Dallas, TX 75227.