

# EDITORIAL: Demonstrate love Church2Church

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Most of us never will feel a hurricane's wrath. But all of us can ease the burden of Baptists and their neighbors buffeted badly by Hurricane Ike.

In fact, the Baptist General Convention of Texas has set up a system to support partnerships between upstate churches and coastal congregations. It's a wonderful opportunity for Texas Baptists to demonstrate unity of faith, practicality of purpose and basic Christian love.

"The scope of need is huge," reported Carolyn Porterfield, director of the BGCT's Church2Church disaster response partnership effort. "The map shows 322 Baptist churches along the coast are located in the Hurricane Ike disaster area. We know at least 70 of them sustained structural damage.

Editor Marv Knox

"So far, we have partnered 21 (upstate and coastal) churches together. We're still waiting for another 10 churches to commit. They're in the 'courting stage'—aware of the need, interested in response, and taking their proposals to the deacons or missions committee or whoever makes the final decision.

"But we still need about 50 churches that will say, 'Hey, we will help.'"

And that's the lowest number. The devastation endured by some churches is so great, they may need partnership help from multiple congregations, noted Wayne Shuffield, the convention's disaster response director.

Here's just a sampling of needs, provided by Porterfield:

- ***Visionary Baptist Church in Houston.*** *The sanctuary roof is damaged and leaking, plywood pulled off, shingles gone. Another building also sustained roof damage. Pastor Manuel Fletcher desperately needs a partner.*
- ***Amelia Baptist Church in Beaumont.*** *This church facility suffered major damage from roof leaks, Pastor Tony Shaw reported.*
- ***First Baptist Church in Friendswood.*** *Like most other churches, FBC's roof was damaged badly. Through Church2Church, Porterfield is trying to set up a partnership with First Baptist and its pastor, David Belk, but the support has not been confirmed just yet.*

The Gulf Coast needs vary widely, Porterfield said. Some churches need help from mud-out crews that do exactly what their name implies—remove mud and all the waterlogged detritus of Ike's grimy visit. Scores of churches need new roofs. Many churches need help for their members, whose homes were flooded and/or ripped by the winds. While some congregations and families are covered by insurance, others are overwhelmed by the potential cost of putting everything back in its pre-Ike place.

Heart-breakingly, Porterfield also acknowledged, "Some pastors need pastoral assistance." Imagine the devastation of not only seeing your own home and place of work damaged but also helping to carry the spiritual, emotional and physical burdens of a congregation.

Even though public attention has turned to other issues, the effects of Ike will linger for months, even years, Porterfield warned. "Think long-term. Like (Hurricane) Katrina and New Orleans. It's not going to blow over."

The needs are specific, she added:

- *Prayer and encouragement.*
- *Physical support—volunteers who partner through Church2Church and travel to the region and help repair damage.*
- *Money—both to replenish the Texas Baptist Men’s disaster relief fund and also to sustain the ongoing BGCT disaster response efforts.*

The challenge is huge but achievable. In Porterfield’s words: “If each church would do just one thing, we could meet the needs of these churches.”

To learn more, volunteer and donate, go to the special website: [www.bgct.org/disaster](http://www.bgct.org/disaster), or call (888) 244-9400.