

# LOTT CAREY Herald

Published by the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention

*Stories of hope*

## AFTERMATH

Hurricanes Katrina,  
Rita and Ike

## LONG-TERM RECOVERY

The Fountain Project

Lott Carey



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National Baptist Convention  
of America



Fountain Baptist Church  
Pursuing The Greater



Missionary Baptist  
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HELP IS HERE!!!

**COVER:** Galveston, Texas area resident Linda Holmes is pictured on the cover at a Lott Carey-supported food distribution site.



**T**he Thursday before Hurricane Katrina made landfall in Louisiana in 2005, I was in New Orleans to attend the funeral of Benjamin J. Maxon, a long time loyal Lott Carey pastor. My attention was fixed on the television news reports about the magnitude of the storm. I was relieved when I boarded my plane four days before landfall. Since I did not grow up around coastlines, I took the forecasts seriously.

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*Many people were mobilizing for the relief work, but our experiences of water disasters in Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Mozambique and Somalia had taught us that major support would be needed after the cameras had left the region for the next hot story.*

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The day after Katrina made landfall, I began to reach out to Pastor Samuel C. Tolbert, a protégé of Pastor Maxon, whom I met on the funeral day. Pastor Tolbert had assumed the leadership of the Louisiana Home and Foreign Mission Baptist State Convention after the death of Pastor Maxon, and he was my best link to the region.

The Lott Carey leadership launched a Mission Alert to call for prayer and emergency supplies for the region, and to request financial support that we would target for our Resurrection strategy. Many people were mobilizing for the relief work, but our experiences of water disasters in Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Mozambique and Somalia had taught us that major support would be needed after the cameras had left

the region for the next hot story. Our planning proceeded to develop Resurrection Centers through which we committed to “helping people rise again.”

It has been more than four years since Lott Carey connected to partners in Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas with a Hurricane Response Strategy. During this time, we consistently helped churches to help their communities respond to the devastation of Katrina, then Rita, then Ike. We worked to support Resurrection Centers to provide pastoral care ministries, social service support, mental health counseling and child development services. From the generosity of the Fountain Baptist Church in Summit, N.J., The Fountain Project facilitated a marriage retreat for pastoral families and coaching to pastors in areas of worship, nurture and missions after the ground literally and figuratively shifted beneath them. The Fountain Project is continuing to help adults with skills training and to advance sustainable community redevelopment. Through partnership with the Ford Foundation, we are launching a skills development and social services support program that will empower nearly 100 families with job skills in construction and nursing careers. Our colleagues in the region continue to leverage our partnerships to expand into new networks of collaboration and impact.

The stories in this edition of the *Lott Carey Herald* highlight some



of the work accomplished through the Hurricane Response Strategy of the Lott Carey network and our partners. We had no idea four years ago that we would still be planting and watering and witnessing God giving increase. There is much left for us to do, but we offer the stories in this magazine to you with two requests.

First, accept our thanks for your investment in this ministry that continues to impact lives and help people to rise again.

Second, help us to continue to nurture families, churches, and communities through your prayer support and financial gifts.

We continue to learn that, as we are faithful, God provides. ■

With hope,

*David*

David Emmanuel Goatley  
Executive Secretary-Treasurer  
Lott Carey

## 'Resurrection model' evolved in the midst of the storm

In the early morning of the Sunday before Hurricane Katrina, the Rev. Samuel C. Tolbert Jr. knew something massive was about to happen.

It was about 7:45 a.m. and he was standing watching cars jammed bumper-to-bumper on nearby Interstate 10 in Lake Charles, La., situated some 207 miles northeast of the Crescent City.

The highway was full and cars were streaming off the exits. Tolbert thought to himself, "What would I need somebody to do for me" in the same situation?

His answer: somewhere to stay and something to eat. Tolbert then told his congregation at Greater Saint Mary Missionary Baptist Church to get ready to begin feeding people. Then he called other area pastors to see if they could assist too, both with feeding and sleeping evacuees.

What happened in the ensuing days, weeks, months and years was to yield a faith-based hurricane disaster resurrection model unlike anything ever done before.



Thousands of people were fed, clothed, counseled and restored through the efforts of the Louisiana Home and Foreign Missions Baptist State Convention, the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention

and the National Baptist Convention of America.

Now that model, which fused together individuals, congregations, religious associations and both public and private groups, has been replicated by the faith community in Texas as it overcomes devastating Hurricane Ike.

Tolbert, president of the Louisiana Home and Foreign Missions Baptist State Convention, and his team didn't know they were creating a model while they were doing it, but slowly their system came together day by day and week by week.

Greater Saint Mary became a feeding site for evacuees in the days immediately following Katrina. Truckloads of supplies to distribute also started rolling in once the state and national conventions and Lott Carey's network spread the word that help was needed.

In the midst of it all came Hurricane Rita, forcing Tolbert and his workers to flee. But when they returned they regrouped and tackled the needs with a renewed intensity.

With funding from Lott Carey, grants and other sources the mass feedings shifted to a more structured model of care. Resurrection centers were set up in Lake Charles, Shreveport, New Orleans and Baton Rouge in Louisiana and in D'Iberville, Miss.

Each with its own coordinator, the resurrection centers all had social service, mental health, youth



Single mother Dana Tucker calls the relief center a "blessing from the Lord."

and pastoral counseling components, and each also had a relief center for more urgent needs such as food and clothing.

The B.J. Maxon Jr. Church Resource Center opened at the Greater Saint Mary site as well. It provided technical assistance for churches so they could effectively respond to evacuees and host communities.

"Every day it was trial and error," said Pauline Hurst, coordinator of the F.H. Dunn Resurrection Center and the Willard Vernon Relief Center in Lake Charles.

For two years the operations were open virtually seven days a week, and a collaborative relationship was built with agencies including United Way, the American Red Cross and Second Harvest Food Bank.

"We were there for as long as it took," said Hurst, herself a New Orleans evacuee who fled to Lake Charles with her family.

■ See "Resurrection model" on page 7



## Restoration center combines relief work and personal empowerment

Drive up to the African-American Catholic Congregation Cathedral of the Lafayette Province, Imani Temple #49 in Lafayette, La., and you would hardly believe thousands of lives have been turned around there.

It is a small structure that includes a sanctuary, rooms used as offices and a gathering space for a café. Behind the main building are portable-style buildings that are equally as modest.

Yet the moment you walk around you realize it isn't the space that matters, but the people working inside. A small band of workers coalesced around the temple's Lafayette Restoration Center have dedicated themselves to that ministry and are effectively carrying it out.

### LAFAYETTE RESTORATION CENTER



**HELP IS HERE!!!**

The restoration center was birthed out of the needs of evacuees following Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and operates through support from the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention and others.

Under the direction of Bishop D. Taara Williams, the center operates a food bank in collaboration with Second Harvest, distributes clothing it receives from retailers such as Target and Wal-Mart, prepares and helps place the unemployed via its employment readiness program, and facilitates an array of family services.

At the height of the disaster the

restoration center team transported food to evacuees placed in FEMA trailers on the outskirts of town. Living in crop fields away from public transportation, trailer dwellers without cars were lost.

The restoration center also held as

many programs as it could for evacuees, who were mentally and psychologically drained. Things like Gumbo Night and Poetry-in-Motion events served to uplift and inspire.

"We would not be able to do all that we do if it were not for all of you," Williams told her crew and representatives of collaborative agencies such as the American Red Cross and the Lafayette Housing Authority. "We are so grateful."

The center's success has been because of people like Belinda Lee, who coordinates the food program. A New Orleans evacuee who said she and her family "just couldn't go back," Lee makes sure anyone who needs food and qualifies gets it.

She estimates the center has provided food to more than 200,000 people since it opened, and every day new clients come in.

Fresh fruit, canned goods, baby food and even refrigerated items like canned biscuits are among the items distributed at the pantry.



Amanda Coffey was in dire need when she learned of the restoration center.

If the center were not there, there also would be a good number of people in the region not adequately clothed.

Once people pay rent, which has skyrocketed since Hurricane Katrina, and then their utilities, "they don't have money to buy clothes and shoes," said Bobbie Reed, resource center case manager and coordinator of the clothing department.

She has formed partnerships with retailers to receive clothes and shoes for the center, which is why practically everything they give away is new or gently used.

The need to expand seems to be a theme at the restoration center – where several years post Katrina there's still so much more left to do. In Lafayette, the ranks of the poor have widened while the cost of living has increased with the influx of new people.

"We're really becoming a poverty center," Williams said.

■ See "Restoration center" on page 7

## New collaborations enable training, expanded food offerings

The folks in Lake Charles, La. are by no means letting up on the work to resurrect lives since devastating Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and four years later even more collaborations are being forged to help people rise again.

Job training, skills development and more diverse food distributions are just some of the ongoing thrusts of the Louisiana Home and Foreign Missions Baptist State Convention, which is based in Lake Charles where thousands of hurricane refugees found themselves displaced.

In continued partnership with the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention, the Louisiana convention is empowering men and women to rejoin the workforce more fully equipped, and is building relationships with food retailers to provide greater nutritional options to those in need.

"It's all the result of the initial partnership with Lott Carey," said the Rev. Samuel C. Tolbert Jr., president of the Louisiana Home and Foreign Missions Baptist State Convention. "We now have a track record known in the community."

The most significant outgrowths of the work include a job skills training partnership to prepare laborers for fields such as general construction, asbestos abatement and hazardous waste remediation.

Through the Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA-local #689), which has established a satellite classroom in Greater Saint Mary Missionary Baptist Church in Lake Charles, area workers can participate in the South Central Laborers Training and Apprenticeship Program. Participants receive certification after completing the six-week training.



Jobs skills training students are learning about various tools used in construction.

*"...we can broaden the numbers of people who can move from being discouraged workers to gainfully employed citizens."*

— Rev. Dr. David Emmanuel Goatley

The Ford Foundation also recently awarded a new grant that will enable training to continue. Every six weeks "hopefully we will be starting another class," said Tolbert, who is the pastor of Greater Saint Mary. Additionally, the funds will provide training for those desiring to enter the field of nursing, Tolbert said.

"This (Ford Foundation) support will enable us to enlarge and refine our workforce recruitment and training model so that we can broaden the numbers of people who can move from being discouraged workers to gainfully employed citizens," said the Rev. Dr. David Emmanuel Goatley, executive secretary-treasurer of Lott Carey.

Food distributions, which were the backbone of the initial relief and recovery efforts immediately after

the storms, also continue to forge ahead through collaborations and partnerships.

"We have not stopped giving food away since September 2005," Tolbert said. "That has continued now for four years."

The necessity for food also intensified with the coming of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike in 2008. Some who had made progress were pushed back again, Tolbert said. "The whole region was affected."

Second Harvest Food Bank continues to provide food for the regular distributions at Greater Saint Mary and now uses the church as one of its official sites, he said. "It gives hope and peace of mind, especially to seniors."

That relationship also has yielded a partnership with Walmart, and in October the food distribution operation was scheduled to begin pickups three times a week from the retailer, Tolbert said.

"That is truly the beginning of something," he said. "The partnership is just going to strengthen." ■



## Resurrection model

■ Continued from page 4

The greatest success was “all of the people that were helped,” said Cynthia Jones, coordinator of the Maxon center and supervisor of the resurrection center coordinators. She estimates more than 15,000 families have been helped through all the resurrection and relief centers.

*“We have the potential here of changing the long-term strategy for our national faith-based organizations.”*

— Rev. Samuel C. Tolbert Jr.

The resurrection centers technically closed in January 2007, but the Lake Charles relief center still opens to distribute food and clothing.

“Every time I come here I get blessed,” Dana Tucker said as she

sorted through clothes at the relief center for her three children.

“They let you get clothes ... and food assistance,” said the single mother who came to Lake Charles in early 2007. “I’m not proud or ashamed. I take it to be a blessing from the Lord.”

Tolbert said their system has been solidified so much that now when a disaster comes, they are able to quickly respond. “One of the biggest things that has come out of this is collaboration,” he said.

Work also has begun through funds from Fountain Baptist Church in Summit, N.J. to provide job skills



A client is processed at the relief center at Greater Saint Mary Missionary Baptist Church.

training, programs to restore and empower pastors, and systems to rebuild communities.

“This can be ongoing until the Lord gets back,” Tolbert said. “We have the potential here of changing the long-term strategy for our national faith-based organizations.” ■

## Restoration center

■ Continued from page 5

Twenty-five-year-old Amanda Coffey had been in Lafayette just two weeks when she turned to the restoration center for help. She’d come from Lake Charles, La., after Hurricane Ike damaged her rented trailer and the landlord wouldn’t fix it. Coffey had \$5 left in emergency food stamps and \$48 to her name when she learned of the center.

*“We are here to inspire people with hope. You’ve got to transform lives.”*

— Bishop D. Taara Williams

“I have nothing and this is the only place that’s helped,” she said while picking out clothes at the center for her two children. “I thank God they

have some winter coats.”

Williams said the center’s goal is not just to hand out assistance, but also to enable people to sustain themselves. Often clients identified at the food pantry or the clothing department move into the center’s employment readiness program.

There, people are taught skills like computer literacy or how to fill out a job application. The program also partners with companies and institutions to place people in jobs.

“We are here to inspire people



Clients receive assorted items via the restoration center’s food pantry.

with hope,” Williams said. “You’ve got to transform lives.”

“That’s really been the difference in our resurrection model,” she said. “It’s a resurrection and empowerment model.” ■

## Project enables long-term, sustainable hurricane recovery

It was a turning point for the relief and recovery effort undertaken by the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention and its partners in the Gulf Coast following hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Immediate services and a resurrection model had been in place for more than a year after the 2005 disasters. People's lives were being restored. But so much more needed to happen – and the money was running out.

The recovery plan also needed to shift to one with a more long-range scope. The plan required a focus on development, sustainability and ongoing nurture. A breakthrough was necessary.

That's when Fountain Baptist Church stepped in under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. J. Michael Sanders. Sanders formerly served as president of Lott Carey.

Located hundreds of miles away from the Gulf Coast in Summit, NJ, the congregation of Fountain Baptist donated \$1 million to the cause. And, in the spirit of true sacrifice, the church came up with the money by putting its own building project on hold.

If you look at the Old Testament book of Nehemiah when the temple was destroyed, although Nehemiah was safe, he wept and mourned for those in the temple, said the Rev. Kenneth D. Cooper, minister to missions at Fountain Baptist Church.



Rev. Dr. J. Michael Sanders

With hurricanes Katrina and Rita, "it's the same thing," he said. "We have a connection to our brothers and sisters, and even though we were not directly affected, we were indirectly affected."

"We could hear their cry, we could feel their pain," Cooper said. "You have no other choice but to reach out and help."

The Fountain donation was earmarked to come in over a two-year period, yet the church gave it all in 18 months, said the Rev. Samuel C. Tolbert Jr., president of the Louisiana Home and Foreign Missions Baptist State Convention.

The convention partners with Lott Carey and the National Baptist Convention of America in the hurricane recovery effort. Also joining Lott Carey on the ground in Louisiana is the African-American Catholic Congregation Cathedral of the Lafayette Province, Imani Temple #49.

With that as the foundation, the Fountain Project was birthed. Designed under the goal of nourishing families, churches and communities, the project is providing a holistic approach to long-term hurricane recovery.

"The money has had more impact than I or any of the members ever imagined," said Sanders. The commitment was to raise a million dollars to be used as best as possible, but "we never anticipated that it would be as far reaching as it has been."

The project has provided for educational scholarships and job readiness training for hurricane evacuees and others affected by the storms, pastoral care consultations, and grants for innovative ministry efforts and community rebuilding, among other things.

"The Fountain Project has enabled us to bring resources directly to families (skills training and life skills training), churches (strategic coaching and ministry grants), and communities (sustainable community redevelopment support)," said the Rev. Dr. David Emmanuel Goatley, executive secretary-treasurer of Lott Carey. "When these core units of community are strong, life is more livable."

"Through this partnership, we have advanced our goal of 'touching people with the transforming love of Christ,'" he said. ■



FOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH



## Consultation ministers to ministers after Katrina and Rita

New Orleans area pastor Christopher Von Cockrell was so deeply depressed after hurricane Katrina that he would go days without eating.

Compounding that was the fact that his marriage had ended in divorce. "I suffered mental loss," he said.

Von Cockrell moved about an hour away to Baton Rouge, La., so he wouldn't have to face his congregants at Macedonia Baptist Church in Slidell. He only came to town to preach before retreating again.

"I wore a face" and was "constantly telling folks I was alright," he said. In reality, "I was in depression. I was mad. I was crazy."

Von Cockrell needed help, and he got it through a pastoral consultation provided by the Fountain Project.

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*"I rededicated my life to Christ and I got re-baptized. This was truly life changing."*

— Rev. Dr. Christopher Von Cockrell

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The project – a ministry response to hurricanes Katrina and Rita – is being implemented in Louisiana by the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention and its state partners. Funding comes from Fountain Baptist Church in Summit, NJ.

The Fountain Project seeks to nourish families, churches and communities through such things as job readiness training, grants for innovative ministries and initiatives to strengthen pastors and the people they serve.

The pastoral consultation began in May 2007 and brought together a core group of about 30 ministers for more than a year to support and care for each other and to focus on



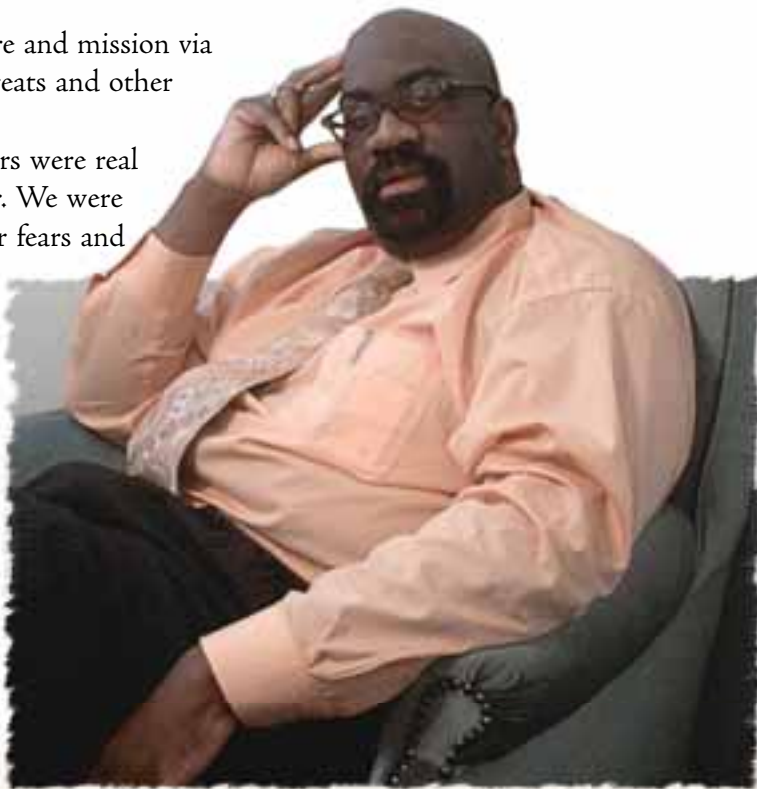
Fountain Project pastoral consultation participants worship during a service and grant awarding program.

worship, nurture and mission via workshops, retreats and other activities.

"The ministers were real with each other. We were honest with our fears and our emotions," Von Cockrell said. "I was able to be healed in this process."

"I rededicated my life to Christ and I got re-baptized," he said. "This was truly life changing."

Each of the pastors received \$10,000 grants through the Fountain Project to implement mission programs they designed to resurrect and transform lives. Among the initiatives were efforts targeting young males, the launch of an intensive street witnessing ministry, and support of evangelism, education



Rev. Dr. Christopher Von Cockrell was healed through the consultation.

and health ministries in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

"I was rejuvenated, refreshed and renewed," said Elder Bernard Waters with Book of Acts Ministry II in New Orleans. Because of the consultation, "I then understood that it (the hurricane crisis) was bigger than me." ■



## Fountain funds provide job skills training, community development

Finding a job and a decent place to live is tough in the current economic recession. But try doing it as an evacuee from the costliest hurricane in U.S. history.

Those displaced from Hurricane Katrina, and subsequent Hurricane Rita, relocated to

Louisiana communities like Lafayette and Lake Charles in 2005. Today they are still struggling to find affordable housing and gainful employment.

The task hasn't been easy given skyrocketing rent and housing costs and too few jobs to match people's skills. That's why the Fountain Project has made family empowerment and community development major priorities.

Efforts including job skills training and education assistance, as well as home building initiatives and infrastructure enhancements are part of the project implemented by the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention and its Louisiana partners. The project is funded by Fountain Baptist Church in Summit, NJ.

And, central to all the work is its faith-based foundation.

"We're here because God mandated us to be here," said Bishop D. Taara Williams, chief executive officer of the Lafayette Restoration Center. "He has trained us for a season such as this."

The nonprofit restoration center is



New homes like this one in Lake Charles, La., are planned for the area's needy.



Restoring communities is a major component of the Fountain Project.

a ministry flowing from the African-American Catholic Congregation Cathedral of the Lafayette Province, Imani Temple #49. It has received funds through the Fountain Project.

One of the integral components of the restoration center's work is its employment readiness program. Clients learn such things as how to complete a job application, the proper communication during a job interview and cultural differences in

the workplace.

A computer lab is available to program participants, and various procedures are addressed including the issue of substance abuse testing in order to qualify for a job.

"We found that it was hard for most people to qualify for jobs," said Courtney Ledet, the employment readiness coach for the restoration center. "We try to target those individuals to obtain certain skills."





**An employment readiness program client works on a home renovation project.**

The Fountain Project also is making strides in the area of community development.

In fact, the Louisiana Home and Foreign Missions Baptist State Convention, based in Lake Charles, bought eight acres of land in town to redevelop into single family homes. The convention also has received funds through the Fountain Project.

Through its B.J. Maxon Community Development Corporation, the Baptist convention plans to build 20 homes over the next two years for mid- to low-income people, and to provide home ownership training. Once the homes are built the focus will turn to housing for the elderly.

There is public housing in the area, "but people want better, they want more and we want to offer them that," said Mary Bills, administrative assistant for the Fountain Project.

If the project can get them on a path, while also ministering to them spiritually, "then that's going to help them and their children," she said. Ultimately, "it's going to impact the whole community." ■

## FOUNTAIN PINES CAMP SLATED TO OPEN IN APRIL 2010

Plans are moving ahead on a retreat and camp center made possible with funds from Fountain Baptist Church in Summit, N.J., to restore hope and resurrect lives following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Fountain Pines Baptist Camp, a 20-plus-acre compound located in Grant County, La., is slated to be dedicated in April 2010, said the Rev. Samuel C. Tolbert Jr., president of the Louisiana Home and Foreign Missions Baptist State Convention.



Renovations are under way on the facility purchased by the convention through a portion of grant money given by Fountain Baptist, under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. J. Michael Sanders, to the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention.

Lott Carey received a \$1 million grant from Fountain Baptist to focus on development, sustainability and ongoing nurture following the storms, and Lott Carey joined its Louisiana partners to implement the Fountain Project.

One of the components of the Fountain Project was a pastors' consultation to provide support for Gulf Coast leaders and to focus on worship and mission. All of the participating pastors were ministering to bruised and battered congregations in post-Hurricane Katrina environments.

Grants received by the pastors through the project were used in programs to uplift the people and their communities. Ten of those pastors pooled their Fountain grants and empowered the Louisiana convention to purchase and create Fountain Pines Baptist Camp.

Fountain Pines "will position us to be dealing with community resiliency," said Tolbert. Tolbert pastors Greater Saint Mary Missionary Baptist Church in Lake Charles, La., and is one of those 10 pastors who collaborated to secure the retreat center.

The facility will be available for diverse activities and programs and will be used by adults, young people and youth alike, he said. The compound includes dormitories, bath houses, office space and a house for an innkeeper.

Because Fountain Pines is situated 175 miles north of the Gulf of Mexico, the space also will be a secure "staging area" if another hurricane hits the area, Tolbert said. ■

## Thousands receive food in Galveston through hurricane resurrection model

By the time the large truck pulled into the parking lot across from West Point Baptist Church about 10 a.m. on a recent Thursday, hundreds of people had already formed a line stretching around the corner and down the block.

They were a melting pot of area residents: black, white, young, old, Hispanic, disabled and others. Many started lining up hours before they knew the truck would arrive just to get whatever food was being handed out.

"I'm here today to get some groceries for the family," said Wanda Hayes, a single mother of four biological children and one she is raising. "Wherever you are at in life you have to make the best of it. You have to be more humble."

Standing in line for the weekly food giveaway at West Point surely has been a humbling experience for Hayes and the rest of the throngs seeking help. It's the hand they've been dealt as survivors of devastating Hurricane Ike, which hit the Texas Gulf Coast in September 2008.

By all accounts it was the most intense storm of the 2008 Atlantic hurricane season, as Ike made its final landfall east of Galveston on Sept. 13.

In the immediate aftermath and subsequent months, Galveston and the surrounding communities have struggled to recover.

The federal government responded through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), but a considerable amount of help has come from religious-based and community based agencies.

A partnership between the Missionary Baptist General Convention of Texas, the National Baptist Convention of America and the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention provided targeted support using a "resurrection model" of care.

The same model, which includes a relief center, social services, pastoral care and food distribution, was first successfully employed after Hurricanes

Katrina and Rita in 2005 by Lott Carey, the Louisiana Home and Foreign Missions Baptist State Convention, the National Baptist Convention of America and the African-American Catholic Congregation Cathedral of the Lafayette Province, Imani Temple #49.

In Texas, the relief operation was facilitated through the Isaac Thompson Church Resurrection Center, the Benford-Johnson Church Relief Center and the G.W. Daniels Church Resource Center. The centers have now closed because the funds have been expended.

Ensuring those in need had enough to eat was a constant in the recovery effort in the Galveston area. West Point Baptist Church had a regular food distribution

program under way prior to Hurricane Ike, but it intensified under the "resurrection model."

In the first five months following the storm, 3,500 families were served via the weekly food distributions.

The people come without fail, "including in the rain and in the dead of winter," said the Rev. K.W. Tillmon, coordinator of the Isaac Thompson Church Resurrection Center. And, "it's constantly growing."

On that particular distribution day, more than 300 people walked away with a bag full of items such as canned tuna and chili, baked beans, bananas and fresh squash. Sometimes there is even meat, but it all depends on what arrives on the truck from "Gleanings From The Harvest," a Galveston-based interfaith organization that receives surplus food and then re-distributes it.

Hayes, a West Point Baptist Church



Food distributed through the resurrection center has helped feed Wanda Hayes and her family.



Community members like these line up for hours to receive the distribution.

member whose house sits just steps away, had to relocate and commute from a town 20 minutes away from Galveston so her children could remain in their same school.

Seven months after the storm she still had not been able to move back home. Hayes must now make serious choices about things as basic as food.

"Right now I'm sacrificing," she said with tears in her eyes. "Your comfort zone has been taken."

Yet, "what this has taught me is to be grateful," said Hayes, who works at The University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB). One of the area's largest employers, UTMB suffered millions of dollars worth of damage from Hurricane Ike. Subsequently the medical center laid off thousands, dealing the community yet another horrific blow.

"We still have our lives," she said. "I still have my kids." ■



## Galveston Baptist churches suffer in storm, find relief in its wake

Church is part of the natural fabric of life in Galveston, nestled on a barrier island along the Texas Gulf Coast.

Not just one, but two or three congregations appear to dot practically every corner of town, and African-American worship houses make up a considerable portion of the lot.

So when Hurricane Ike charged through the island like a stampede of wild horses in September 2008, the island's churches received a stomping unlike any they had ever seen before.

When the high waters receded, displaced worship services, uninsured or underinsured buildings and emotionally scarred congregants were left in the storm's wake.

**A water mark shows levels from Hurricane Ike were waist high in some parts of Sunlight Baptist Church, the Rev. Alfred Tryon points out.**



"That water was not playing," said the Rev. Charles Wheat, pastor of St. Luke Missionary Baptist Church. "This is the first time (in recent history) that anything has happened like this."

Storm water was at least five feet deep in parts of St. Luke with more than \$200,000 in damages to spaces including the sanctuary, fellowship hall and offices, he said.

*"The psychological effect of this storm is still ongoing."*

— Rev. A.J. Jefferson

The congregation of about 175 members was unable to use the church for months, and finally the worshippers returned on Resurrection Sunday, April 12, 2008.

"I still have some people who are displaced ... who can't get here," Wheat said seven months post Ike.

The message at St. Luke can be echoed multiple times over by Galveston's other church leaders. Seventeen of 19 African-American Baptist churches were reportedly

impacted by the storm, and many had no comprehensive plan in place for dealing with the destruction.

The Missionary Baptist General Convention of Texas, the National Baptist Convention of America and Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention partnered to provide help for these churches via a "resurrection model" of relief and recovery. The

model included food distributions, social services and pastoral care. Operations have now ended because the funds have been expended.

"It's really been rough," said the



**The Rev. Charles Wheat, pastor of St. Luke Missionary Baptist Church, and his congregants were displaced from their church for months.**

Rev. Alfred Tryon, pastor of Sunlight Baptist Church, which suffered more than \$250,000 in damage. The church had flood insurance, but not windstorm coverage.

Alongside the physical damage, the biggest impact has been a sharp decline in attendance, he said. Tryon believes the people are psychologically wounded, especially the seniors.

"Membership is not what it was," he said. "It's a mind thing."

"The psychological effect of this storm is still ongoing," said the Rev. A.J. Jefferson, executive director of the relief and recovery effort, which included the Isaac Thompson Church Resurrection Center, the G.W. Daniels Church Resource Center and the Benford-Johnson Church Relief Center. "Many of our churches have had reduced attendance."

"Six months is not going to be long enough to restore the area," he said. "My conservative estimate is at least two years." ■

## Resident gets assistance with housing crisis through resurrection center

Sharon Corbin was at her wit's end over what to do about her Galveston home rendered uninhabitable following Hurricane Ike.

As was the case with many area residents, churches and businesses, she had flood insurance, but not windstorm coverage. Ike made U.S. landfall in Galveston on Sept. 13, 2008 with winds of 110 miles per hour.

Corbin's insurance company paid out \$35,000 to repair her home, which she lives in with her young son and three dogs. But they made the check out to her mortgage company, which kept the money and applied it to her loan principal.

"I was just so frustrated," she said.

Then Corbin read a newspaper article that mentioned a disaster relief center where she might get help. She called and spoke with the Rev. Kevin Tillmon, pastoral care associate for the Isaac Thompson Church Resurrection Center.

The center, along with the Benford-Johnson Church Relief

Center, was part of efforts by the Missionary Baptist General Convention of Texas, the National Baptist Convention of America and the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention to provide comprehensive hurricane relief and recovery. The "resurrection model" of care used also included the G.W. Daniels Church Resource Center. All three centers are now closed.

Corbin said Tillmon connected her with Edna Courville, the resurrection center's social worker, who in turn referred her to agencies and resources that could provide some tangible relief. Courville also advised Corbin on how to receive funds through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).



Sharon Corbin was "frustrated" and didn't know where to turn for help.

"Day by day I just try and clean something else," Corbin said of the home she and her son moved back into even though she knew it was unsafe.

Nearly 75 percent of homes in Galveston were damaged in the hurricane and approximately 20,000 people displaced, according to the Galveston Housing Authority.

The city's public housing projects also were taken offline after the storm, and available places to live are nearly non-existent.

Many of those affected "need an outreach person," said Courville. "They don't know how to be connected."

She and her co-workers operated under the premise that "anybody can come," and Courville served as many as 75 to 80 clients a week while the center was operational.

"They gave me the resources that I needed and the knowledge that I needed to be able to work with FEMA better and to be able to get ... additional help," Corbin said.

Also, "they gave me a lot ... of empathy, which I needed," she said. "I think all of us need it a little bit." ■



Numerous Galveston homes, and everything in them, suffered severe damage from Hurricane Ike.



## Connecting Galveston's needy to resources and supplies essential to resurrection effort

Connecting people to resources and supplies was, and continues to be, an essential part of the relief and recovery operation in Galveston, Texas in the wake of 2008's Hurricane Ike.

"It's at a level to where we are pulling together in the true sense of collaboration," said David W. Mitchell,

director of programs and services for The Jesse Tree. His agency, a Galveston faith-based community service organization, has worked closely with the Isaac Thompson Church Resurrection Center since the horrific devastation.

The resurrection center was one component of the hurricane recovery operation implemented in Galveston immediately after the September '08 storm. Leaders in this effort were the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention, the Missionary Baptist General Convention of Texas and the National Baptist Convention.

"They (the resurrection center) have referred people to our program," said Mitchell. For example, people who have needed help with their medicine have been made aware of The Jesse Tree's prescription assistance program, he said.

The advocacy has been significant, he said. There is a willingness to

truly serve the community, Mitchell added.

Lott Carey's local partners also have worked closely with other entities in service to Galveston's residents, including Ambassadors Preparatory Academy.

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*"They have helped to sustain this school. We couldn't survive if we didn't have the support that we've had."*

— Dr. Pat Williams

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The pre-kindergarten through 6th grade charter school is just steps away from a weekly food distribution site at West Point Baptist Church. West Point is a part of the Missionary Baptist General Convention of Texas and was home of the resurrection center when it was fully operational.

Every Thursday after the food

distribution, Ambassadors Prep receives some of the extra items, which is used as snacks for the students. The children, many of whom were homeless following Hurricane Ike, are still suffering from the effects of the storm.

"They have helped to sustain this school," Dr. Pat Williams, the school's superintendent and principal, said of West Point and the resurrection center operation. "We couldn't survive if we didn't have the support that we've had."

The community's needs are tremendous and the client base includes everyone from senior citizens to single mothers and fathers, said Edna Courville, the resurrection center's social worker.

People need to be hooked up with the resources that are out there, she said. The relief and recovery operation has worked to "bring them to that source." ■



Dr. Pat Williams, the superintendent and principal of Ambassadors Preparatory Academy, is shown here with some of her students.



Lott Carey Foreign Mission Convention  
220 Eye Street, NE, Suite 220  
Washington, DC 20002-4362

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