

# After the Storm:

ARTICLE AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEN HORN

**Managing Editor Ken Horn traveled to the Mississippi/Louisiana Gulf Coast in February with members of AGUSM MAPS RV and Convoy of Hope to assess the progress of rebuilding efforts in the disaster-struck region.**

## **New Orleans**

It is a week before Mardi Gras and there are already signs of revelry in the devastated confines of New Orleans. As if the still-present debris left by last year's killer Hurricane Katrina is not enough, new trash, including Mardi Gras beads and streamers, is heaped in some areas of the city, adding to the sense of chaos and heaviness that still marks the Big Easy.

continued on page 17

*Katrina  
six  
months  
later*

# KATRINA HIT

Together we responded.

Glued to our televisions for days watching Katrina's unbelievable atrocities unveil, we couldn't imagine the world would ever be the same again. Now, while life goes on as normal for most of us, the victims of Hurricane Katrina are still reeling as they continue to struggle through her aftermath. But God has not forgotten – and neither will we.

Please join us at any of our "God Cares" events this summer.

May 20	Picayune, Miss.
June 3	Lake Charles, La.
July 8	Port Arthur, Texas
July 8	Silsbee, Texas
July 8	Beaumont, Texas

- An additional three events are being planned for the New Orleans area this fall.

- Relief supplies continue to be distributed and numerous reconstruction projects are under way.

- **25 million pounds of relief supplies**
- **Medical clinics**
- **Church and home reconstruction**
- **Thousands of volunteers**
- **Compassion outreaches**

From the millions of people that you've helped by partnering with the General Council of the Assemblies of God, Convoy of Hope and many other ministries — Thank you!

For the latest project information or to volunteer your time or make a financial donation, please visit us at [convoyofhope.org](http://convoyofhope.org), e-mail [godcares@convoyofhope.org](mailto:godcares@convoyofhope.org) or call 1-800-988-0664.

**CONVOY OF HOPE** 



The crowds in the pre-Mardi Gras celebrations are small and almost entirely local. Many hotels have not rebuilt and rooms are at a premium.

Katrina hit this below-sea level metropolis on August 29 of last year, flooding 80 percent of the city and sending more than two-thirds of the population into exile. Only 20 of the city's 128 public schools have reopened. Many residents have not yet returned; many will never come back.

When we enter the devastated lower Ninth Ward, it is as if we are stepping back in time. It appears as if the hurricane could have happened yesterday. Cars are still overturned and personal treasures lie strewn among the debris. Some streets of the ward, which was originally a cypress swamp, still have standing water.

Many residents of the hurricane-ravaged city do not welcome the revelry. In neighborhoods where Katrina floodwaters lifted homes off foundations and deposited them in other locations, often in the middle of streets, most people are in no mood to party.

"I think we've got far more important things to do than fooling with Mardi Gras," said one resident. Instead of adding to the clean-up burden, "This year, I think we should have

overlooked it — try to get to some of this work that needs to be done."

In the New Orleans area, AG volunteer teams are doing a lot of that work. Fory VandenEinde, coordinator for the Convoy/MAPS coalition throughout the three-state hurricane region, says teams have worked on more than 1,400 homes, as well as 51 churches, a Teen Challenge center and the School of Urban Missions (through March).

House of Prayer Assembly of God on Canal Street in the heart of the city is one of those churches. At first glance, the church appears to have little damage. But the stately brick building is typical of many structures that have had



Pastor Jon Smith in the sanctuary of House of Prayer AG in New Orleans.

standing water that caused tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage.

Pastor Jon Smith and his wife could not get back to their

## Timberline Church Medical Evangelism FORUM

August  
14-16

2006  
Timberline Church  
Fort Collins, CO  
970.482.4387



### DOES YOUR CHURCH HAVE A MEDICAL MISSIONS MINISTRY?

IS YOUR CHURCH INTERESTED IN STARTING  
AN INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL MISSIONS PROGRAM?



Timberline Church, in cooperation with Assemblies of God HealthCare Ministries, is hosting an international Medical Missions Forum. We hope you'll join us for three exciting days in the Rocky Mountains as we accomplish the following:

- Provide an opportunity for dialogue among churches that currently send international medical evangelism teams.
- Create a nationwide network and strategy for churches involved in this type of ministry.
- Provide training and practical resources for churches that are interested in beginning a medical evangelism ministry.

REGISTRATION: Only \$25/person  
Registration Deadline: July 12, 2006  
(Late registrations accepted based on space availability.)

Contact Timberline Church TO REGISTER  
or for information about the forum.

PHONE: 970.482.4387  
[www.timberlinechurch.org/forum.html](http://www.timberlinechurch.org/forum.html)





When we enter the devastated lower Ninth Ward, it is as if we are stepping back in time. It appears as if the hurricane could have happened yesterday. Cars are still overturned and personal treasures lie strewn among the debris. Some streets of the ward, which was originally a cypress swamp, still have standing water.

church for over a month. What they found when they were able to obtain a pass into the city is representative of the damage hidden inside buildings that look sound from the outside.

"There was still wet mud inside the building, pews against the wall, furniture flipped over," Smith says. "The pews were split



U.S. MAPS National Director Jerry Bell (right) and construction representative Gary Fehr amid the rubble of the Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans.

because the water had stayed in the building for so long. Our offices were totally destroyed, with mold covering the books, desks and shelves."

The Smiths also lost everything on the first floor of their home.

The church's devastation is more than physical. With people scattered over six states and many not likely to return, the current congregation numbers seven, including Smith's wife and mother. The sanctuary will seat 500.

But with the help of Convoy and MAPS, rebuilding is already progressing. With

limited resources, the ministries make sure that churches are viable before committing to them.

"God didn't release us from the burden that He gave us specifically for this area in the city of New Orleans," Smith says. "There's no question about us coming back."

### Pascagoula, Miss.

A few days earlier, before the rest of the team arrived, I spent three nights in a FEMA trailer on my sister Pat Brown's property. Her home has been gutted. In Pascagoula, FEMA trailers are nearly omnipresent. Each modest home seems to have one somewhere in its front yard.

"There are church groups everywhere," Pat tells me. "Most everyone you talk to says a church group did something for them."

### Biloxi, Miss.

The mood in the Sunday morning service at Northside Assembly of God is remarkably

continued on page 20



Ed Evans at a home construction site in Biloxi.



over 30 of today's top Christian artists from all genres



**Wednesday:** Crabb Family, Mike Bowling Group, Aaron Wilburn, Crossway  
**Thursday:** Crabb Family, Mike Bowling Group, Salvador, Aaron Wilburn  
**Friday:** Crabb Family, Mike Bowling Group, Isaacs, Karen Peck & New River, Brian Free & Assurance, McRaes, Aaron Wilburn  
**Saturday:** Crabb Family, Mike Bowling Group, Isaacs, Booth Brothers, Whisnants, Paid In Full, Lynda Randle, Russ Taff, Aaron Wilburn and much more!!

**Afternoon Praise & Worship Extravanzas**  
 Thursday, Friday, and Saturday at 1 p.m. Executive Inn Showroom  
 • Midnight Jam • New Artist Spectacular, and much more!!!  
 For hotel reservations call Executive Inn at (270) 926-8000.  
[www.executiveinnrivermont.com](http://www.executiveinnrivermont.com)

[www.thecrabbfamily.com](http://www.thecrabbfamily.com) or **(615) 826-7218.**  
 Get your tickets while there are still VIP Passes!

### Don't miss YOUR opportunity to be heard by the pros!

Do your crowds not respond to your music, and you wonder why?!  
 Do you want to know what a Record Company does ... and whether you need one?!  
 Do you want to learn the TIPS to writing a southern gospel hit song?!

### Register for the GMA Academy at Crabbfest Talent Competition and Seminar!

LEARN about performance, record companies, booking, songwriting and more during classes taught by the best in the business!  
 SPACE is limited, register TODAY!

- Prizes for vocal, group and songwriters include:
- A single song publishing agreement with Daywind Music Group
  - Performance slot at Crabbfest!
  - Full tuition to GMA's Music in the Rockies



(800) 489-1131  
[visitowensboro.com](http://visitowensboro.com)

# Then came Rita

Thursday, September 22, 2005. All day, since 6:30 in the morning, Denise Van Brocklin coaxed her old Ford Explorer along in the bumper-to-bumper evacuation traffic heading north out of Houston. She hoped to take 16-year-old daughter Allyson and 9-year-old son James to stay with friends in Arkansas until Hurricane Rita passed.

They couldn't make it. By 2 a.m. on Friday, the SUV's clutch burned out in Lufkin, Texas. On her cell phone, Denise called for help from a dark Wal-Mart parking lot as the storm made its way inland.

"We can't help you," the overloaded crisis operator told her. "You'll have to ride it out in your car."

Denise went into the Wal-Mart with her family. My friend Phyllis McDaniel, a lifelong member of First Assembly in Lufkin, was manning a sign-in table at the front of the store. Because of loss of power, the store was allowing only 50 people in at a time.

Denise only wanted to get some drinks and snacks for the children before they headed back to their car. "Would it be OK for us to pull around to the back of your store and ride out the storm?" Denise asked Phyllis.

"No ma'am," Phyllis said. "I will find a place for you. If nothing else, you'll come home with me."

Phyllis began to make phone calls. First Assembly already housed more than 800 evacuees. So Phyllis took the family to her son's home, and then her own. That's how I heard about them.

By Monday, electricity in our community was restored. I called Phyllis to see if her power was back on. When I found out she was still in the dark and had guests, my husband and I moved them to our home.

Denise and her children are no longer strangers to us. They stayed with us through the week while her car was repaired (with help from her home church in Plim Grove).

Denise, Allyson and James joined us at First Assembly and served the evacuees there. They had been helped. Now they wanted to help others.

Hurricane Rita brought its share of heartache. But it also brought us new friends, and gave our church the opportunity to share Christ's love. I'm so blessed to be a part of First Assembly in Lufkin. It is truly God's church in action, a spiritual trauma center to those in need. When the storms of life are the strongest, the light of Christ shines the brightest. **tpe**

— Sherry L. Davis

E-mail your comments to [tpe@ag.org](mailto:tpe@ag.org).



upbeat. Here the main structure is sound, but significant damage has still been done. A newly laid carpet graces the sanctuary.

This congregation was hit hard. Twenty-three families had homes completely destroyed — "either empty shells or just completely wiped off the foundations," I am told.

The church sustained half a million dollars in damage. A mile from the Gulf, it had no flood insurance. Most of the ministries of the church, especially the children's ministries which are a focus here, came to a screeching halt. Sunday School did not reconvene until March 6.

After Katrina hit, it took Pastor Jeff Fillmore three days to clear enough debris to get out of his house and to the church. With phone connections out most of the time — both land and mobile — church members had to be located by word of mouth.

"We compiled a list of who was where and how they were doing," says Fillmore, "along with how to contact them and what needs they had."

The first Sunday the congregation met, 35 out of a church of 210 attended.

"We faced everything from trying to get trees off of buildings to having to tear out Sheetrock and insulation. We lost the pews and every bit of floor covering through all three buildings," Fillmore says. He is quick to add, "The Assemblies of God realized the need; the response has been wonderful."

Northside became a staging

area for MAPS RV/Convoy of Hope, averaging 12 RVs at any given time. From the church, volunteers spread



Part of the Katrina memorial in Biloxi.

out all over the Gulf Coast. Fillmore estimates that some 700 volunteers have made Northside their home base.

After the service, Ed Evans, who has been in charge of the MAPS RV/Convoy of Hope work here, takes me on a tour of homes they are working on. Evans, "from L.A. — that's lower Alabama," he says, has served with MAPS RV for 11 years and is a veteran of hurricane relief.

"I wasn't a Christian until later in life," Evans tells me. "In the Korean War, I was miraculously saved when a mortar round landed in the same hole that I had just gotten out of." He feels what he is doing now is part of the work the Lord saved him to do.

Fillmore calls the volunteer workers a godsend. "We were blessed with Ed Evans and his wife, Millie," he says. "The

Evanses have basically been the general contractors, taking charge of the entire rebuilding project."

Ken Dixon, whose RV also sits behind Northside, coordinates the work throughout the state of Mississippi. MAPS RV only does quality work, he says. "Though we use volunteers, we want everything to be top-notch." And they are succeeding. Many of the homes and churches will be left in better condition than they were before the hurricanes.

In nearby neighborhoods, many of the homes sit ghost-like, just like they were the day Katrina struck. Cars are still parked in driveways or in garages with no doors.

"It gets depressing," Evans tells me as he drives me through the area. "I've made about 30



Damaged casino in Biloxi.

tours down here; the teams need to see it," he says. Another team arrives the next day.

Biloxi is gambling central in Mississippi — known for its barge casinos. Some of these were lifted across the highway

and deposited on dry land. We pass a long line of debris where a casino barge flattened a Holiday Inn.

In an effort to pump life back into the decimated area, the state has taken the dubious action of legislating permission for the casinos to offer gambling on land. The casinos that have reopened are doing a bumper business.

Upscale homes along the beach — many designated "hurricane proof" — took a beating. Some were torn from their foundations, others completely demolished.

There is not much left of the "Old Brick House," built in 1790 and identified as a historic landmark. It had weathered more than 200 years on this beach until

Katrina. A large sign in front of the heavily damaged historic home of Jefferson Davis reads, "Help Beauvoir rebuild."

One vacant school sports a waterline up to its roof. An exclusive gated community is less than a ghost town

— only two homes are left standing. Vietnamese Christian Assembly of God, one of the original AG buildings in the area, is vacant after being under 12 feet of water. The parsonage has been leveled.



*Katrina  
six  
months  
later*

Unlike many churches that have seen attendance radically decreased, The Refuge has seen its Sunday services double in size. The majority of the growth is from conversions. People have been saved at church services nearly every week. One was saved this Sunday; as many as 30 have made commitments at one time.

**Gautier, Miss.**

On Monday morning I go to The Refuge in Gautier to meet the rest of the team. This 1-year-old church that meets in a shopping center was largely spared. Situated conveniently on Highway 90, it became one of the main Convoy of Hope staging areas for emergency distribution right after the hurricane hit.

“But it’s a different time of need now,” says Pastor Rick Smith. “They don’t need the food and the diapers as much



Pastor Rick Smith in front of his church in Gautier.

as they need somebody to help them tear their drywall out or get rid of the mold in their home.”

MAPS RV/Convoy of Hope has been doing this kind of work since soon after the storm. Some 80 teams of 5-30 workers have based here. Volunteer teams from Pennsylvania (15 people) and North Carolina (nine) are here right now. At one point 120 people were living in the church.

Unlike many churches that have seen attendance radically decreased, The Refuge has seen its Sunday services double in size. The majority of the growth is from conversions. People have been saved at church services nearly every week. One was saved this Sunday; as many as 30 have made commitments at one time.

And people have been saved in other venues. From their base at The Refuge, Steve and Carol Kosmoski coordinate the MAPS RV/Convoy of Hope work for Jackson County — Gautier, Moss Point, Pascagoula, Ocean Springs and smaller towns. The Kosmoskis have been holding devotions at the church each morning. Two people have come to know Christ at these.

Pastor Darrell Worley, who serves as presbyter for the Biloxi section, arrives with the rest of the assessment team in his church’s 15-passenger van. He will be our guide for the rest of the trip.

As we travel, Fory and Cindy VandenEinde, seated behind me, are constantly on the phone coordinating groups and donations.

“Another load of Sheetrock donated from Minnesota,” Fory says after one call.

**Pascagoula**

Returning to Pascagoula, we visit a home that took in six feet of water. The owner

is living in a FEMA trailer as MAPS RV workers rebuild.

“The Refuge has been



Tammy Parks (center) with Carol and Steve Kosmoski.

wonderful to me,” Tammy Parks says. “Since the storm, nothing’s the same. You feel you’re alone, but you’re not, because you meet people like Steve and Carol [Kosmoski] who have given me hope.”

An AG volunteer shared with her about Christ when they began working on her home.

“He told me what God could do for me,” Parks says. Brought up in church, she had wandered. But she has reconnected. “God wants me to live in His way and I want to live that way,” she tells us. “I’m

still struggling some, but He’s helping me.”

**Biloxi, Miss.**

Back at Northside, the RV hub bustles with activity. Ken Rock, an RVer from Michigan here with his wife, Linda, is on his way to a building supply store for supplies. Ed Evans asks him to also pick up some Sheetrock mud. Volunteers constantly scurry in every direction — running errands, tearing out, building up — the pace doesn’t slow.

continued on page 26

www.vfcc.edu

VALLEY FORGE  
CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

WWW.VFCC.EDU

Apply **online** today, or **call** for more information

**Majors:**

- Business Administration
- Children’s Ministry
- Christian Education
- Christian Ministries

- Church Music
- Early Childhood Education
- Elementary Education (Public Teaching Certification)
- Elementary Education (Private Teaching Certification)

- Music Education - K-12 (Public Teaching Certification)
- Music Education - K-12 (Private Teaching Certification)
- Music Performance
- Pastoral Counseling

- Pastoral Ministry
- Psychology
- Senior Adult Ministry
- Theological Studies

- Urban Ministry
- World Missions
- Youth Ministry

1401 Charlestown Road  
Phoenixville, PA 19460  
800.432.8322  
Fax 610.917.2069  
admissions@vfcc.edu

VALLEY FORGE

press on. FORGE ahead.

800.432.8322 • www.vfcc.edu



### Waveland and Bay Saint Louis, Miss.

Two of the hardest hit cities, Waveland and Bay Saint Louis are in such desperate straits that they are considering a merger to keep the communities viable. Six months after Katrina not a single home, grocery store or business has been rebuilt on Beach Blvd. in Bay Saint Louis.

Even CNN noted that spiritual faith is a factor in the city's determination to rebuild: "It might seem any town's spirit would be broken by now," said one reporter, "but Bay Saint Louis is different. Faith runs deep here. In a town where everyone knows everyone and nearly everyone's lost everything, giving up is not an option."

They are not giving up in Waveland either. Don Bowman, a retired missionary who was involved in Tabernacle Evangelism, has been coordinating the work at First Assembly for three months.

Pastor Jeb Banashak and his family rode out the storm in the church. Water reached chest-high in an area of Waveland that had never flooded before. His home was totally destroyed; his family's home is now a FEMA trailer.

The name Waveland takes on new meaning as waves of volunteers descend on the site. Praise Assembly from Tilton, N.H., is here for the second time. From memory, Banashak

rattles off a long list of states and churches that have helped.

"The thing that amazes me," Banashak says, "is how many people have come in response to a calling from God."

New Hampshire resident Keith Malcolm is here for a



*Pastor Jeb Banashak (right) with Don Bowman at the Waveland church.*

second time. "I'm a truck driver, laid off in the winter, so it's a good time to come," he says. "The blessings we get are more than what we give."

Bowman recounts the progress — about two-thirds of the project is done. The church, reduced to a shell, has been rebuilt from scratch and reroofed. Soon to come: Sheetrock, floors, an all-new kitchen, bathrooms, air conditioning and more.

### Picayune, Miss.

At the request of local AG leaders, who saw an opportunity to reach out, MAPS RV and Convoy of Hope have not restricted their rebuilding to AG churches. At Lighthouse International Church, an independent Pentecostal congregation,

Pastor Harvey Benard is grateful for the work they have done on his church.

### Louisiana

Driving into Louisiana on Tuesday, we view some of the most abject devastation yet. Many homes have been obliterated. Occasionally a ray of hope (or optimism) shines in homemade signs. "Rebuilding: Do not bulldoze," some read.

Port Sulphur is halfway down Plaquemines Parish, a narrow neck of land that reaches the farthest out into the Gulf of Mexico. We are stopped at a police checkpoint. The name of the church on the van is enough to get us waved through. All the locals know that churches are doing the lion's share of volunteer work.

### Buras, La.

One of the southernmost towns in the state, Buras was ravaged by walls of water when its levees ruptured. Its remote location makes it



## Strong Academics



**One-of-a-Kind Education**  
Experience it for Yourself  
AG Colleges

Get your FREE AG College Guide (74LX7001) • 1.800.641.4310 • colleges@ag.org





Presbyter Darrell Worley (left) with his friend, Pastor Harvey Benard, at Lighthouse International Church.

difficult to reach. For some 40 miles no gasoline, groceries or supplies are available.

Miracle Assembly of God, one of only a handful of organizations in the area that are rebuilding, was under 13 feet of water. Workers from Washington state scurry about the buildings in swarms. Everything needs to be rebuilt, including the prayer center the church finished constructing just two years ago and the parsonage, which was swept off its foundation.

Pastor Max Latham, who has been reaching out to the community since immediately



Fory VandenEinde (left) and Convoy of Hope President Hal Donaldson (right) with Buras pastor Max Latham.

after the disaster, is grateful for the assistance. "Convoy of Hope has been just what the name says," Latham tells us. "It gave us hope."

The massive AG volunteer force has sustained an impressive effort at rebuilding throughout the region. But the need is continuous. Jerry Bell,

U.S. MAPS national director, is concerned that the response continue.

"What we need most," Bell says, "is more and more church teams to get involved and come to the area and invest their time, talent and resources into helping these people rebuild their lives, invest in this Fellowship and help us bless the Kingdom."

The scope of the rebuilding is daunting. But AG volunteers, through MAPS RV and Convoy of Hope, are helping churches

and people recover, leaving the name Christian in the



Pastor Jeff Fillmore (right) with author Ken Horn in front of volunteers' RV.

hearts and minds of everyone who thinks of rebuilding after Katrina. **tpe**

For more information or to arrange a team trip contact:

The MAPS/Convoy Katrina Recovery Initiative  
417-831-3770  
To donate materials:  
Fory VandenEinde  
417-860-6294

KEN HORN is managing editor of *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*.  
E-mail your comments to [tpe@ag.org](mailto:tpe@ag.org).

**Get on board**

We're in the **Gulf Coast** helping survivors rebuild and refuel. Get on board with U.S. MAPS and Convoy of Hope through one-week missions trips. Great opportunities are waiting for you!

**Call 417.831.3770**




Convoyofhope.org

**I OPENING**

**Pacha:**

- Participated in his first animal sacrifice at age 14
- Prays to Satan on a daily basis
- Believes God is too busy to bother with his issues
- No one has told him otherwise

Throughout the CIS and the Baltic Republics, our team is engaged in bringing the hope of Christ to a tapestry of cultures and religions. In just over a decade we have taken the gospel across this region, yet many communities and people groups still have never heard. We are going to the edge, shining the light of God's love in the darkest corners of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.

God is opening doors. All you have to do is walk through them. It's that simple.

Read our story. Open your "I". Join the Eurasia community.  
Visit [www.eurasiacommunity.org](http://www.eurasiacommunity.org)

**EURASIA**  
CIS/BALTICS