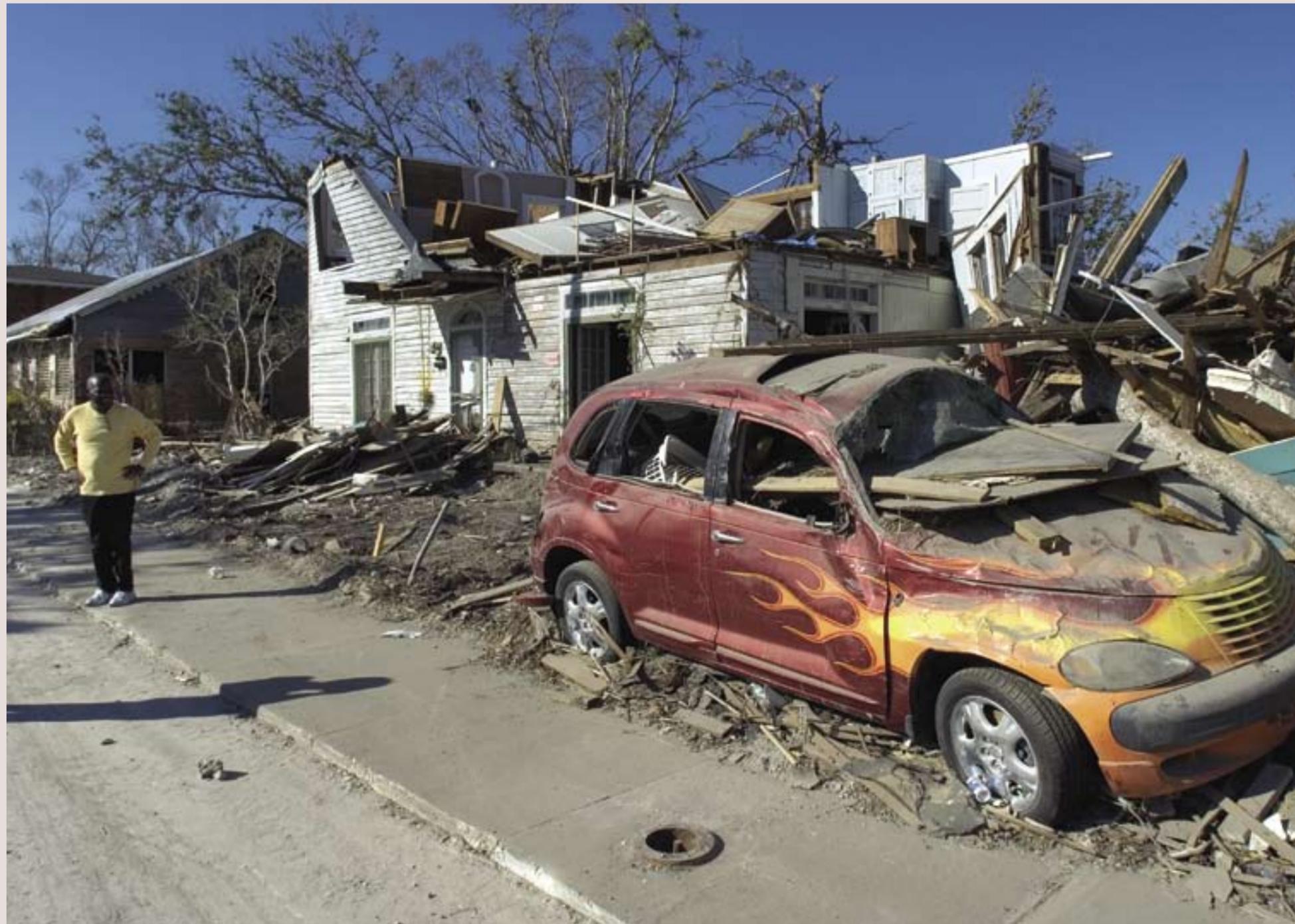


EMBRACING THE PEOPLE OF BAY ST. LOUIS, MISSISSIPPI

Drawn by Christ's love, hurricane victims find compassion and salvation at 'Camp Hope.'

story by Christmas McGaughey, photos by Geraldine Wilkins



Charles Johnson, a former Bay St. Louis city council member, surveys ruins of Hurricane Katrina that remain untouched two months later.



Grace Scanlan, left, CC Valley Springs, gives a hug and a Bible to Janet Cox.



Mike Buford of CC Visalia, CA, unloads a box of toys at the Calvary Chapel camp.

In a makeshift community of trailers lined up at the State Park, the Beugez family gets ready for the day. Seven-year-old Madison, twins Megan and Jessica, 9, and big sister Shelby, 14, head for the Calvary Chapel Community Relief Center known as "Camp Hope" to the locals of Bay St. Louis, MS. On the Mississippi Gulf Coast, Hurricane Katrina smashed away hundreds of homes and centuries of history in the quaint waterfront towns of Bay St. Louis and Waveland.

For the Beugez family, the camp has brought stability to their recently disjointed lives. It's also the place where they each accepted Jesus Christ.

"Every day we get up in the morning, and the kids are like, 'Hurry up; let's go!'" said mom Stacy, a petite brunette with a soft Southern drawl. "When we came here, everyone was so nice to us. They talked to us, got us reading the Bible." Her family had attended a traditional church but never understood how to apply the Bible to their lives. Not

only have workers encouraged her, she said, "They've become like our family."

She watched with a smile as her three youngest bounded to the "Kidzone" tent at the Calvary-based camp that serves 3,000 meals every day since Hurricane Katrina shattered their routines in late August. Being around other believers at the camp and learning to study the Bible led Stacy to make a deeper commitment to Christ. Her daughter, Shelby, was the first to accept Christ at the camp during an evening devotion.

"We were singing a worship song, and I thought, 'I just need Jesus,' and burst into tears," she said. After the service, the pastor shared the Gospel with her. "I gave my life to Christ; I felt relieved right away." She was given a Bible and started reading the Gospel of John.

Shelby has begun to understand God's hand working in her life. She even has peace about the storm that ripped apart her family's home. "I'm starting to understand why



The Beaugez family—regular visitors to the Calvary Chapel camp where they each accepted Christ—breaks for lunch while rebuilding their home.



The Beaugez family attends Sunday morning service at “Camp Hope.”



Twins Jessica and Megan, left, and sister Shelby, right, hug CC team members good-bye.



Megan, 9, helps rebuild by removing carpet tacking from a bedroom.

this happened,” she said. “If the hurricane hadn’t come, I wouldn’t have gotten saved. I never liked helping people before, but now I almost can’t help it.”

Her father, Jerry, accepted Christ the next day. Overwhelmed by having to rebuild his home and the community, Jerry was at a breaking point. Touched by the love and assistance shown to his family by the camp workers, he brought them all to the Sunday morning service. “We were singing ‘Open the Eyes of My Heart,’” he remembered. The Lord pierced his heart, and he surrendered to Christ, casting all his need and care on Jesus. One by one, his other three daughters accepted Christ.

“With the Lord’s help, we’ll get through this,” he said. “And the things that matter

are right there in that room.” With a teary smile, he pointed to where his four daughters were laughing and talking to one of the volunteers. It hasn’t just been the food or the childcare that has touched the community, Jerry explained, but the Calvary group has shown God’s love in a special way. “They’re putting in the blood, sweat and tears with us—like Dale. He’s become like a brother to us.”

Dale Brothers heard about the outreach to the hurricane victims and left his home in Queens, NY, to volunteer full-time. He sold everything he had—including his rare Fender guitar—to live in a tent and minister there. Dale has seen God’s love heal the children and families that come to the camp. “That’s what they’re getting the most—love,” he said.

Gumbo and the Gospel

Between 3,000 and 5,000 meals per day have been served at the blue-and-white striped tent that stands out amid the hurricane-flattened coastal area of Bay St. Louis. Volunteers sit with local people who come to the oasis of order and peace. Some chat amiably, some cry, some share their frustrations or needs. And at almost every meal, someone accepts Christ.

“We see results every day,” said CC Visalia assistant pastor Mike Buford, one of the rotating camp hosts. “As Christians, we are used to praying and sometimes not seeing the results right away. But here, we see answers almost immediately. God is supplying everything we need. And kids are getting saved, people are getting saved.”

One brisk October night, the air was filled with the smell of catfish gumbo and the sounds of happy chatter. Short-term volunteer Sonia Mir, CC Chino Valley, was asked if she could share in Spanish with someone. She shared the Gospel with Carlos, a construction worker from Mexico. He listened soberly, reading aloud the verses she pointed to in Romans. A few moments later, she and four other people held hands and prayed with him to receive Christ. He lifted his head, beaming. After giving him a Spanish Bible, she was summoned to help a couple. She shared the Gospel with them and confronted them about living together without being married. Together they prayed to receive Christ. “It was amazing,” Sonia said. “I had no idea what was going on in their lives, but the Holy Spirit just gave me the words to say and the verses to share.”



Volunteer Sonia Mir, center, of CC Chino Valley, CA, prayed with Mexican construction worker, Carlos, left, to receive Christ.

At another table, two young men shared with a teenage girl and her family, and she accepted Christ. The next morning, they led another local woman to the Lord. She was a Catholic who loved her family and had a great respect for the Lord. When they shared an analogy about Christ being the lifeboat—not works, or a church, but faith in Christ alone—she realized that was what she needed. She prayed to receive Christ and then asked for verses to help her be a godly wife and to share with her college-age children. Not only has God been pouring out His love to the bewildered community through the camp, He’s been providing for their physical needs.

Amazing Provision

“You see those miracles every day. We were laughing about praying for things, and all of a sudden they drive up,” Mike said. “It reminds me of how God provided for George Muller. Maybe it isn’t as dramatic, but to us it’s amazing.” For one meal, the cook needed stewed tomatoes, and the kitchen staff prayed together. A few moments later, workers pulled up with boxes of canned food, including stewed tomatoes. Later, syrup was needed for pancakes and French toast. They prayed, and 30 minutes before breakfast, the fire department stopped by and dropped off three boxes.

Mike and another camp leader mentioned they’d like to give toys to the children who had lost all of theirs to the storm. “Within 30 minutes, a truck pulled up with a whole pallet full of new stuffed animals.” Answers come quickly, leaders say, because the need is genuine and God is maintaining what He started. “It’s like we just speak these needs and the Lord provides,” said Pastor Dave Johnson, CC Saline County, AR. “I think it’s because our priorities are right. As James says, you ask and don’t receive because you ask amiss—to spend it on your selfish desires. But we’re not asking amiss; here we are providing food to put into the mouths of

“You see those miracles every day. We were laughing about praying for things, and all of a sudden they drive up.”

Mike Buford, CC Visalia, CA



Patrick Bane, CC Chino Valley, plays with Justice, 2, at the Kidzone.



Andrew Elkin, left, and Thomas Diaz, both of CC Chino Valley, pack hot meals for residents. The camp serves nearly 3,000 meals a day.



Peyton Bankston, 11, heard the Gospel and accepted Christ at the camp. She worships the Lord with volunteer, Tami Martin, CC Placerville, CA.



Carlo Nicolo, CC Costa Mesa, CA, shares the Gospel with a young girl who later prayed to receive Christ. He encouraged her to read and memorize Jeremiah 29:11. A graduate of the School of Ministry at CC Costa Mesa, Carlo led many to Christ at the camp.

Several Calvarys behind the camp have committed to being there through this year and are praying about planting a church there.



Abel Maldonado, CC Montebello, CA, gives Jerry Heitzmann his first haircut since the storm.



CC teams spent two days cleaning a historic cemetery in the heart of Bay St. Louis.

the community. It's not to enrich ourselves or make the camp more comfortable."

Brad Whitley of CC La Habra, CA, said God has provided from the start. "Our first serious need was water," he shared. "We use 50 to 75 gallons of water a day for cooking." One morning they ran out of water; then a truck pulled up with 1,200 gallons of cooking water. Another day, their supply of eggs was almost gone, and a truck pulled up with 150 dozen eggs just before breakfast.

The camp is making an impact that even government officials have noticed, Brad said. "The EPA came through to talk to us. They said that, in these situations, they usually allow for so many diseases caused by malnutrition, but they had seen no malnutrition or diseases in our area. With no supermarket for 30 miles, that's saying a lot."

Calvary volunteers have also been ministering in the local high school and coordinating with city officials in community projects.

Spirit Coordination

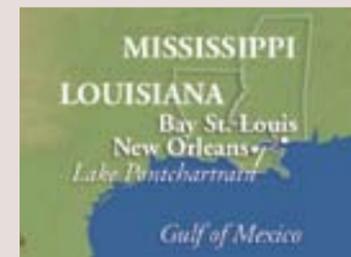
God gets all the glory for starting the camp, leaders say. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, a team of Calvary Chapel pastors and leaders came to the Gulf Coast a week after Hurricane Katrina. Praying together, they felt the Lord would lead them to a special place for a long-term base, said Jason Stead, missions pastor of CC La Habra. Later, a relief worker directed them to Bay St. Louis. The mayor gave them use of the city's baseball field. Since volunteers had no place to stay—many of them sleeping in tents or in cars—the pastors saw a need for continued food service and a staging center for relief workers. A week later, a group of 15 Calvary Chapel pastors from several states arrived to survey ministry needs there, and helped unload supplies and set up the camp.

The day they finished, God brought workers. "Fifty people from five different Calvary Chapels just showed up. Somehow God led them to that camp," Jason said. "It was definitely the Lord leading us all to that place."

Several Calvarys behind the camp have committed to being there through this year and are praying about planting a church there. CC La Habra oversees the camp. ☞



David Stein of Horizon Christian Fellowship, San Diego, greets Joyce Cox, 76. He and a team from CC Beachside in Huntington Beach, CA, cleaned her flooded home.



PRAISE REPORT

After sending teams to minister in the Gulf Coast, Calvary Chapel Vancouver, WA, sent Brad Nichols to begin a fellowship in storm-torn Pascagoula, MS. "People are so much in need and so open to the Lord," said Pastor Daniel Gettemy of CC Vancouver. "It's amazing how God works through calamity to bring people to Himself. We're excited to see what He is going to do." A Gulf Coast native, Brad and his wife Jennifer served at CC Vancouver for 6 years—one year as full-time missionaries in Romania.

Bay St. Louis
714-446-6222
www.calvarychapelrelief.org
calvaryrt@aol.com