

NEW ORLEANS

Those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins; you will raise up the age-old foundations; and you will be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of the streets in which to dwell.

Isaiah 58:12 (NASB)

story by Christmas McGaughey
photos by Geraldine Wilkins

Battling the stench of sewage, rotten food, and mildew, Pastor Kevin Cox, CC New Orleans, had to sledgehammer open the door of his St. Bernard Parish home. His front room was a pile of muddy plaster and mangled furniture.



Pastor Kevin Cox, of CC New Orleans, and Sal Cannizzaro pray for a St. Bernard Parish Sgt. whose displaced family is in Houston.



Kevin returns to his St. Bernard Parish home, damaged by flood waters. Since the water brought in biological and chemical hazards, he wore protective clothing.



In the eastern fishing town of Yscloskey, Kevin surveys the home of a resident from the CCNO fellowship. The mayor opened parts of New Orleans so residents could check their homes.

“When we hear how God is providing for people—story after story—we just rejoice together. Sometimes we just can’t take it in, it’s so good.”

Pastor Kevin Cox

From the rancid debris, he extracted a photo album, keepsakes of his children’s small handprints, and remains of his wife’s family china.

The devastation to his home and the tens of thousands of homes around him caught up with him on his own threshold, and he wept like he hadn’t wept in a long time.

Then God’s peace returned to his heart, the peace that had been guiding and sustaining him through the humid, hectic days and

nights. With new strength, he went back out into the Louisiana sun to help others retrieve what they could.

“The peace of the Lord has been very consistent,” Kevin said. “Yes, sleep has been minimal and things are stressful, but the Lord has the ability to supersede all that.” With God’s strength, he said he’s been able to coordinate Calvary Chapel relief teams as they come in and continue ministering to neighbors, police officers, and his wounded flock in New Orleans.



After giving them gift cards to help buy supplies, Kevin encourages his neighbors.



Kevin recovers china and a handprint tile from his home. Flood waters left blackish brown sludge that cracked into pieces.



Kevin uses a sledgehammer to enter his home, which was checked and marked with a "0," indicating no bodies were found.

Following the Spirit's leading has become a three-dimensional, moment-by-moment experience. "I wake up every day with no agenda, and it's like He whispers in my ear and I just know what I'm supposed to do next."

Coordinating with CC Stone Mountain, GA, dozens of Calvary Chapels from all over the U.S. have sent teams to the Gulf Coast area to help clean debris, distribute supplies, and minister to shocked residents. Nearly 20 teams came through the New Orleans area

within the first three weeks, with another 22 teams on the way.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, God is using His church to draw people to Himself in a powerful way.

"We've watched these teams come in and take care of residents and their property; then these residents come to church and hear the Gospel."

Citing Isaiah 58:12, Kevin said, "I feel that God is going to use us to raise up, repair, restore, and rebuild. The important thing is that God has our hearts broken for one another and for people so that our motivation is correct while we're helping." Relief teams have been working to make livable those CC families' homes that can be salvaged. When people return, he predicted, "It will probably be just as emotional as when I saw my home. We need to be embracing them, crying with them, and assisting them. That stuff is pretty intense."

Amid the rubble and loss, there have been times of almost unspeakable joy.

"When we hear how God is providing for people—story after story—we just rejoice together," he said. "Sometimes we just can't take it in, it's so good."

Others around the country are providing for evacuees—helping pay bills and housing and feeding entire families. "We see God's hand in every situation."

Two CC New Orleans families, now in North Carolina, had their meals paid for by the staff at a local restaurant. Hearing their story, the wait staff handed over all of their tips to the families, who then sent them to Kevin for the saints at CC New Orleans.

He hopes relief teams will continue coming for the next year at least. "This will be an opportunity for the church to minister after others have forgotten the need."

"In some areas we haven't even gotten started yet," he said. "People aren't there—just a wasteland of debris." As residents start filtering back into now-closed areas of New Orleans, Kevin said that one long-term goal for the coming months is to set up several relief centers to minister and distribute supplies.

Pastor Mitch Lovett, of Calvary Fellowship in Baton Rouge, has been taking teams to work at the Red Cross's River Center Shelter, which has housed between 2,000 and 5,000 evacuees at one time. Louisiana's capital,



Books hung in Kevin's chandelier after flood waters receded.

Baton Rouge, has become the largest gathering place of evacuees in the region. Though Red Cross officials turned other religious volunteer groups away, they welcomed the Calvary Chapel volunteers because of their hard work and cooperation. Calvary teams have been helping distribute food and clothing to the thousands of homeless evacuees.

Nearly 50 men from CC Philadelphia have been trained as chaplains through the church and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association's Rapid Response Team.

"When a community is traumatized through an incident, people are in shock; people are crying; people are open and receptive to the love of Christ," said Jerry Paradise, assistant pastor at CC Philadelphia. "As chaplains, we provide a calming presence and offer to pray for them."

Jerry compared the aftermath of Katrina to that of 9/11. "The devastation is beyond comprehension—it really is," he said. "In 9/11, the tragedy occurred in a commercial district, with office buildings destroyed. This disaster occurred in hundreds of residential communities, causing thousands of people to become homeless."

"The comfort we bring is the care and compassion and love of Christ," Jerry said. "I personally have never seen fields whiter unto harvest than they are now in the Gulf Coast region."

Still reeling from the effects of Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans was hit less than four weeks later by another wave of flooding and destruction from Hurricane Rita.

New Orleans

Speaking of New Orleans' harried city workers and police officers, Kevin stated, "They're going to need people to listen to them and pray with them for quite a while. The need for chaplains will be ongoing."

Pastor Sandy Adams, of CC Stone Mountain, GA, is coordinating relief teams from Calvary Chapels to work with the Calvary pastors in the region. "We want to provide relief in a way that connects people to a local church." Sandy commented, "In the South, Calvary Chapel is still an unknown entity. It's my prayer that people of the region will come to know Calvary Chapel as a group of people who love with the compassion of Jesus and are doers of the Word, not hearers only." ☞

New meeting info and church mailing address:

**CC New Orleans
300 Williamsburg Drive
Mandeville, LA 70471**

The church will be meeting here at 10 a.m. Sunday mornings through October. For future information, call Pastor Kevin Cox at: 504-858-8288.

grace@calvarynola.org
www.calvarynola.org

Contributions can be sent to:

Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa

ATTN: Hurricane Katrina

3800 S. Fairview

Santa Ana, CA 92704

OR

Calvary Chapel Stone Mountain

Attn: Gulf Coast Relief Fund

1969 McDaniels Bridge Road

Lilburn, GA 30047

Look for coverage of Hurricane Rita in the next issue.

OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

New Orleans



Full of undetermined health hazards, dried sludge from flood waters litters the ground for miles. Kevin prays with neighbors after returning to their homes.

Relief Teams

“Many Calvary Chapels across the U.S. have expressed interest in aiding the hurricane-devastated area,” said Pastor Sandy Adams, of CC Stone Mountain, GA, who is coordinating teams to minister alongside affected Calvary fellowships. “The response has been overwhelming; it’s really wonderful.”

“We want to provide relief in a way that connects people to a local church,” he said. “Teams that go through us will be provided a staging area, a roof over their heads, and a shower.”

“Since there are only a few Calvary Chapels in the Gulf Coast area,” he said, “Some churches may choose to go on their own. If they do, they should go self-sustained, with campers or tents. It will be difficult to find a hotel room.”

770-736-2828

ccsm@mindspring.com

www.calvarychapelstonemountain.com

Individuals

Those without a team who want to serve in the affected areas may contact Safe Harbor Ministries.

949-858-6786

800-797-HOPE (4673)

info@safeharbor.us

www.safeharbor.us

Supplies

Supplies for the Gulf Coast area are coordinated through U-Turn for Christ or Safe Harbor Ministries (see above).

U-Turn for Christ

951-943-7097

www.calvarychapel.com/romoland

Licensed Contractors

Licensed building contractors who can offer consultation or charity construction, please email ccof@calvarychapel.com

Trained Responders

Trained Police, Fire, and Rescue chaplains, medical personnel, or crisis counselors may contact Safe Harbor Ministries (see above) or Horizon USA.

858-277-4991

www.horizonsd.org

Alternative Relief Site

Mission Command Base

714-446-6222

www.calvarychapelrelief.org