

Oklahoma Baptist State Convention Disaster Relief Team

“Working Our Way!” (W.O.W.)

On Sunday, May 19, 2013, an EF3 tornado tore through southeast Oklahoma leveling several small communities. As families began initial efforts toward recovery from this Spring escapade of storms, another tornado sweep through the central plains.

On the afternoon of Monday, May 20, 2013, an EF5 tornado, with peak winds estimated at 210 miles per hour (340 km/h), struck Moore, Oklahoma and adjacent areas, killing 24 people, including 10 children, and injuring 377 others. It is estimated that at least 13,000 homes were destroyed or damaged and 33,000 people were affected. More than 100 people were pulled from the rubble alive since the afternoon of May 20. Among the hardest hit areas were two public schools: Briarwood Elementary School and Plaza Towers Elementary School and the Moore Medical Center which at present there are no plans to rebuild.

The Oklahoma Baptist State Convention, Dr. Charles Whitlow, President, has been diligently at work along with other community organizations assisting and meeting the needs of fellow Oklahomans who have been impacted by this disaster. Pastor Teron Gaddis, Pastor-Greater Bethel Church and National Baptist Convention State Disaster Management Director for the Oklahoma Baptist Convention is working with the National Red Cross and local pastors and churches to provide relief for families in Moore, OK and surrounding areas.

Since the onset of the disaster we have assigned three (3) levels of volunteers to assist the Red Cross:

- 1st level of volunteers are those individuals who were trained and badged at the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.;
- 2nd level of volunteers are those who have been trained locally; (these persons were immediately activated at the onset of this disaster
- 3rd level-spontaneous volunteers were oriented and trained on site.

STATUS OF VOLUNTEERS:

- Volunteers are serving in areas such as shelter workers, food servers, disaster clean up, etc.
- Volunteers have been assigned to assist the Red Cross with training and orientation of volunteers from other states;
- Volunteers are processing and distributing equipment to Red Cross personnel and assisting in contacting mental health partners to provide trained counselors and therapists to families and individuals affected by the disaster.
- Volunteers are making periodic site visits to affected counties (Pottawattamie and Lincoln) outside of Moore (Cleveland county) to assess the needs of those areas
- Volunteers recruited a group of young people, from one of the local churches to work in the Norman area to provided services to families housed in the University of Oklahoma housing units.

Pastor Gaddis has also worked with Dr. J.A. Reed, Jr., Pastor-Fairview Baptist Church, OKC and Vice President of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. (Western Region) to initiate and activate the Oklahoma City Christian Relief Fund where financial donations can be made locally to assist with the immediate needs of people in the Moore, OK area. Several pastors and local churches from the ecumenical community have responded with financial donations to this fund. Other pastors and churches from across the United States have also been moved by this devastation and have provided assistance in a variety of ways.

President Barack Obama visited Moore, Ok on Sunday, May 26, 2013. After viewing first hand the massive impact this natural disaster has ravished on this community, he began his press conference with this statement, "*A picture is worth a thousand words*". The President also quoted Isaiah 32:2a, "*[Man] will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm...*" The EF5 tornado struck Moore, Ok on May 20, 2013, but the impact was felt across the nation; this cataclysm moment in time has opened the door of opportunity for each man to be a shelter from the wind for families in Oklahoma.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

The magnitude of this disaster warrants the ongoing support of people locally and from people across the length and breast of this nation. We need volunteers to assist us in "rebuilding the city". It will take time, but it will also take all of us working together. To volunteer to work, call:

**Oklahoma Baptist Convention W.O.W. Disaster Team
571-439-1881**

You can also help by donating to:

**Oklahoma City Christian Relief Fund CCSR
(Concerned Clergy for Spiritual Renewal)
P.O. Box 17452
Oklahoma City, OK 73136**

Or

**The National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.
National Disaster Relief Fund**