





# A promise

Despite destroyed sanctuaries,  
rampant unemployment and  
loss of homes, AG pastors are  
determined to rebuild churches



# to stay

**By Kirk Noonan**  
Ken Horn photography

**F**or years, Slidell, La., has been a tranquil city where tourists scour antique shops and boat enthusiasts set sail. After the eye of Hurricane Katrina swept directly over Slidell, 31 miles northeast of New Orleans, the city is anything but idyllic. Splintered power poles lean low, sailboats stacked one on top of the other clutter the marina, and sidewalks overflow with piles of mud, soggy Sheetrock, furniture and twisted lumber.

Like many communities along the Gulf Coast, it will be months — and maybe even years — before Slidell regains some semblance of the way it was.

The same is true of The Harvest, an Assemblies of God church in Slidell, which was inundated for days with 5 feet of water.

Though Doug McAllister, senior pastor of The Harvest, has seen his church destroyed, his congregation scattered and his entire staff laid off,



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he is hopeful for better days.

“Even though our church building was put out of ministry, our parking lot was not,” says McAllister, 42. “Now we’re touching people in our lot who we would’ve never been able to if not for this storm.”

Within 48 hours of Katrina’s landfall, McAllister had invited Convoy of Hope to set up a distribution hub in the church’s parking lot. Tons of ice, water and food have been provided to those in need. Many of the volunteers manning the hub are laypeople and staff

members from McAllister’s church.

“I laid them off, but they keep working,” says McAllister of his staff members. “They’re ready to keep serving in the ministry while we believe God for our finances and stay focused on our call.”

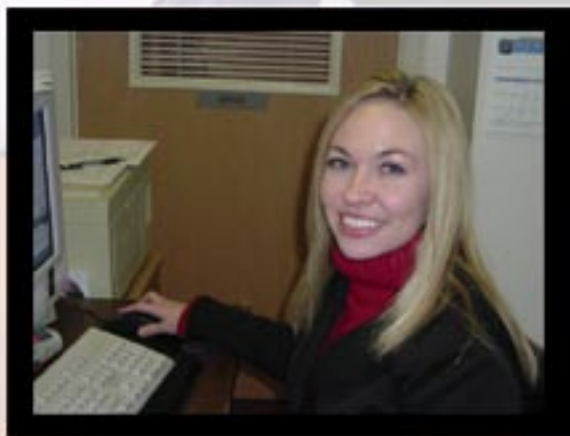
McAllister could be a spokesman for many AG pastors along the Gulf Coast who are faced with similar circumstances. More than half of McAllister’s congregation lost their homes and places of employment. Some will move away; others will stay but be unable to support

the church financially anytime soon.

“For the short term, the storm has put our church out of business,” says McAllister matter-of-factly. “But our people are very resilient and we continue to meet in our parking lot for Sunday services. It’s true — you really don’t need a church building to have church.”

Despite such optimism, The Harvest’s predicament underscores the difference between Hurricane Katrina and other storms that have battered America’s coastlines. Katrina’s wrath affected hundreds of communities,

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leaving entire communities of people homeless and unemployed. That fact has left The Harvest and many other AG churches and laypeople in a perilous financial position.

“Every person in my church lost everything they had,” says Max Latham, pastor of Miracle AG in Boothville, whose hometown of Buras is located near the southeast tip of Louisiana. “But one thing we’re finding out now — even though we [the congregation] are scattered throughout Alabama, Texas and Louisiana — is that we all miss the

fellowship and sense of community the church provides. It’s going to be difficult to rebuild, but we’re going back.”

Three weeks after Katrina, much of Buras is still underwater. But already numerous offers to help rebuild the church, says Latham, have come in. One church from Florida has told Latham they will help pay his salary for six months. Others have promised to send teams and materials for reconstruction.

“This is the mission field God has given us,” says Latham. “We were going to rebuild before we had all the

offers for help, but now it’s just confirmation that the mission is ongoing.”

McAllister says the only thing he and his staff can do now is help others piece their lives together and move forward with ministry.

“We’re going to dig out, rebuild and re-establish our church,” he says almost defiantly. “God has been good to us and we’re going to pick up where we left off and keep serving Him and this city.

“I wouldn’t wish this kind of storm on anybody, but now that it has hit us,” he adds, “it has become an oppor-



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# GOD'S WORD for today

## November

- 1 1 Corinthians 1-4
- 2 1 Corinthians 5-7
- 3 1 Corinthians 8:1 through 11:1
- 4 1 Corinthians 11:2 through 14:40
- 5 1 Corinthians 15
- 6 1 Corinthians 16
- 7 2 Corinthians 1-7
- 8 2 Corinthians 8,9
- 9 2 Corinthians 10-13
- 10 Acts 18:12 through 20:1
- 11 Ephesians 1-3
- 12 Ephesians 4-6
- 13 Romans 1:1 through 3:20
- 14 Romans 3:21 through 7:25
- 15 Romans 8
- 16 Romans 9-11
- 17 Romans 12,13
- 18 Romans 14:1 through 15:13
- 19 Romans 15:14 through 16:27
- 20 Acts 20:2 through 21:16
- 21 Acts 21:17 through 26:32
- 22 Acts 27,28
- 23 Colossians 1:1 through 3:4
- 24 Colossians 3:5 through 4:18
- 25 Hebrews 1,2
- 26 Hebrews 3:1 through 4:13
- 27 Hebrews 4:14 through 7:28
- 28 Hebrews 8:1 through 10:18
- 29 Hebrews 10:19 through 12:29
- 30 Hebrews 13



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tunity to meet our neighbors, feed the hungry, and give a cold drink of water to people in need.”

Ever since the Convoy hub in Slidell opened there has been a nonstop line of cars streaming into the parking lot. McAllister says more than 12,000 families received supplies and were ministered to in the first two weeks after the storm.

“People who have lost everything, including their homes and jobs, are out there every day so they can encourage their neighbors and let them know they can make it,” says Convoy of Hope’s Mike Ennis, of the volunteers who have worked at the hubs. “Chris-

tians across the nation need to be praying that God will meet these people’s needs, provide employment and that pastors and churches stay in these communities so there is not a spiritual vacuum.”

Avoiding a loss of spiritual vitality in these communities is precisely why McAllister, Latham and other AG pastors in the Gulf Coast are determined to help their churches rebuild and survive. And the best way to do that, they say, is to continue serving others. ■

*Kirk Noonan is associate editor of Today’s Pentecostal Evangel. E-mail your comments to [pe@ag.org](mailto:pe@ag.org).*

## How to **help**

Long after the catastrophic images from Hurricane Katrina fade from the evening news, people across the Gulf Coast will be working hard to rebuild their lives. They will continue to need the sacrificial help of concerned individuals, families and organizations. Whatever form any one act of assistance takes, when combined with the efforts of millions of compassionate people it will have a lasting impact. The key to successful reconstruction is taking a long-range view of the need and looking for repeated opportunities to meet it.

**Cash:** Cash donations are the best and quickest way to get help to those in need. You may give online at <http://ag.org>. Credit cards are accepted and 100 percent of all donations go directly to the Katrina relief projects.

**Districts:** For information about Assemblies of God district efforts, go to their Websites: Louisiana ([www.laaog.org](http://www.laaog.org)), Mississippi ([msdistrictag.org](http://msdistrictag.org)), Alabama ([alabamaag.org](http://alabamaag.org)), south Texas ([www.stxag.org](http://www.stxag.org)).

**Medical Teams:** HealthCare Ministries at General Council headquarters is coordinating medical teams to go to these areas. You will find information on joining one of these teams at <http://www.healthcareministries.org>.

**Group Volunteers:** There is a need for church groups to participate in clean up and reconstruction projects. Information will be available at [www.ag.org](http://www.ag.org) or by calling (417) 831-3770.

**Convoy of Hope:** Convoy of Hope has distributed truckloads of ice, water, food and other relief supplies. For updates or information, go to [www.convoyofhope.org](http://www.convoyofhope.org).

— *Compiled by the Office of Public Relations, General Council of the Assemblies of God*

# The Devastation

District offices report 88 AG churches directly affected by the August 29 hurricane. Many of the buildings were severely damaged or destroyed. A number of parsonages were also wiped out, along with the homes of hundreds of church staff members and congregants.



## Louisiana

- 1. Algiers
- 2. Arabi
- 3. Belle Chasse
- 4. Bogalusa
- 5. Buras
- 6. Chalmette
- 7. Covington (2)\*
- 8. Franklinton
- 9. Hammond
- 10. Harvey (2)
- 11. Kenner
- 12. Kentwood
- 13. Lacombe
- 14. Lafitt
- 15. LaPlace
- 16. Mandeville
- 17. Marrero (2)
- 18. Meraux
- 19. Metairie (2)
- 20. New Orleans (8)
- 21. Pearl River
- 22. Slidell (2)
- 23. St. Bernard

## Mississippi

- 24. Biloxi (4)
- 25. Brooklyn
- 26. De Kalb\*\*
- 27. Ellisville
- 28. Escatawpa (2)
- 29. Gautier
- 30. Gulfport (2)
- 31. Hurley (2)
- 32. Jackson\*\*
- 33. Kiln
- 34. Laurel (3)
- 35. Leakesville (2)
- 36. Long Beach
- 37. Lucedale (4)
- 38. McComb
- 39. Meridian (2)\*\*
- 40. Moss Point (4)
- 41. Noxapater\*\*
- 42. Ocean Springs (2)
- 43. Pascagoula (3)
- 44. Petal
- 45. Philadelphia\*\*
- 46. Picayune

## Alabama

- 47. Poplarville
- 48. Quitman
- 49. Richton
- 50. Vancleave
- 51. Waveland
- 52. Waynesboro (3)
- 53. Wiggins
- 54. Bayou La Batre
- 55. Coden

\*Numbers in parentheses indicate multiple churches damaged.

\*\*City marker south of actual location.