

Resurrection



Construction workers dismantle the steeple at Richey Baptist Church to make way for the new one. The church suffered substantial damages after Hurricane Ike. The process with insurance agents has been slow but the church continues to rebuild.

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Doug Perkins stood across the street on the Saturday morning after Hurricane Ike hopeful that his church had withstood the storm.

But he didn't worry for very long as the church thrived in the aftermath of Ike where and when it mattered most.

The congregation of Richey Baptist Church spent the weeks in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike sheltering others.

The church, which had regained its electricity within hours of the storm, was designated a Red Cross shelter location for the many families in Pasadena and from the Galveston area whose homes were damaged or destroyed after Ike.

It became a makeshift sanctuary, providing a temporary home in addition to distributing food and clothing to the displaced and to other residents affected by the hurricane.

In the midst of serving its community in crisis, Richey Baptist was dealing with its own obstacles.

The roof of the church's two-story education building was destroyed by hurricane winds causing major leaking into the sanctuary, totaling \$850,000 in damages and which took a year-long process with insurance agencies before recovery could begin.

"All the walls were wet, the carpet was wet and we had to have that building professionally dried out and the sheet rock removed – it was completely gutted," said Pastor Michael Thomas. "The building had to be totally remodeled."

The congregation would use the gym in an adjacent building for regular services, but that was only after it had re-focused its priority.

While church service was cancelled the Sunday after Ike, the congregation never skipped a beat as it continued its ministry to its members and to its community.

"The Red Cross was on sight and FEMA was on sight registering people for six weeks after the hurricane," said Thomas. "We ministered to those people even in the midst of our loss."

Several months before Ike, a massive fire erupted at Compton Court Apartments on Richey Street, leaving many of its tenants temporarily homeless and with little resources.

The church opened its doors within hours of the fire to provide food, water, clothing and shelter and when Ike hit, the Red Cross called on them.

"It actually held our church together more by being able to minister," said Thomas. "The church was not damaged, the building was damaged. But the church is the people and so while the property was damaged, the church was strong."

The numbers expanded in membership and Thomas believes it was the church's response in crisis that led many in the community to join in good faith.

"Our church actually grew, not from victims of the hurricane, but from people coming and wanting to minister," Thomas added. "As a result of these two tragedies, our church has actually grown from 30 members to 90 members. These two tragedies have inspired people to be part of that ministry."

One year later, the church sanctuary remains in part-disrepair and last Thursday afternoon, staff member Doug Perkins stood by and watched as construction workers were in the process of dismantling the broken 34-foot steeple which had been partially destroyed and which had contributed to much of the church's roof damage.

But Perkins believed the church's re-construction had already been complete a year ago.

"We were helping out the people who needed it," he said. "That's what it's all about."