

## **Grace Fellowship and our Mission in the Tornado Disaster in Monroe County**

17 Monroe County residents lost their lives to the tornado on or since 4/27/11. About 160 people were injured and treated in more than 4 different hospitals, 150 homes were totally destroyed, 14 of 16 businesses were destroyed, 4 of the 5 churches were destroyed not to mention storm damage all around the area.

Monroe County residents not affected by the recent tornados have been very busy in our relief efforts. Local Law Enforcement Officers, Fire Fighters, Nurses and Others were the first responders and search and rescue initially. Many local churches including Grace Fellowship, Christian Chapel Church of Christ, Smithville Church of Christ, Nettleton First Baptist and Sav-a-Life of Monroe County served as donation drop sites immediately after the tornado struck. Donations of food, clothing, toys, house hold items and cleaning supplies (cash and Wal-mart Cards) were dropped at these locations sorted and distributed to residents in need. First Baptist Church of Amory (staffed with nurses around the clock) became a over-flow area of the injured and housed or found housing for people who lost their homes. Christian Chapel and Smithville Churches of Christ fed volunteers, law enforcement, fire fighters and residents in Smithville (and provided ice and water initially) and continue to serve in the area. Grace Fellowship and First Baptist Church in Amory are now serving as Disaster Staging Centers for the rebuilding of Smithville.

The clean-up began the day after the tornado struck as local volunteers assisted clearing road ways, eliminating dangerous debris and assisting home owner in salvaging important papers, pictures and other personal and monetary valuables. After the first week, clean-up has been coordinated through FEMA, the Corp of Engineers, and local businesses. They are allowing volunteers to come in and work in the POD (United Way Point of Distribution Center) and assist home owners with clean-up efforts. Several truck loads of donations arrive every day at the POD, Sav-a-Life and frequently at churches who are remaining active in the next phase of the disaster recovery.

At Grace Fellowship, we are housing volunteers and law enforcement officers in our church in the Sunday School areas from all over the US (Michigan, Florida, Texas, Virginia Beach, Oklahoma, Arizona, Nashville, Lake Charles, LA; Starkville, MS; Brandon, MS and the Gulf Coast) and have put hook-ups and a clean-out outside for campers to use. We also have had people at our church from mission groups: The Arm of Mercy Works, Texas and YWAM, Nashville, TN who volunteered in the Smithville area. We have a camper that has been donated for use that we are planning to use for a group from Lake Charles, LA who are coordinating Christian churches to assist in feeding residents, volunteers, and workers in the Smithville community during the duration of the rebuild. They are purchasing the food and we are supporting them through food donations made to the church. The Southern Baptist Convention Relief Team has provided us with a trailer which houses 3 showers, a washing machine and a dryer in addition to the shower, washing machine and dryer in the church.

Churches have been sending food, toiletries financial support for electricity cost and to help feed and house the volunteers. We have cots, mattresses (we could use a few more), bed linen, towels, bath-clothes, toiletries, washing detergent, etc...for volunteer use.

We are offering space for volunteers to stay at Grace while serving in the Smithville area during the rebuild. If your church has an adult or youth group or you hear of any other church group or others looking for opportunities to serve, please call 257-1228, 256-1192 or 315-6820 to schedule space to stay. Others ways to assist in the effort is through financial support to help pay expenses such as utility bills and to assist with needs posted on our Facebook site "Grace Disaster Relief". Check out our website @ [www.worshipatgrace.net](http://www.worshipatgrace.net)

God is working and we are seeing him clearly through PEOPLE serving HIM by serving others in Monroe County. Join us in giving HIM the Glory for what HE is doing!!