

Due to the recent flooding in Baton Rouge and the surrounding communities Baton Rouge Lutheran School and the Trinity Lutheran Child Development Center are seeking Prayers and Donations for school families who have been seriously impacted by it.

First and foremost we want you to know that the Christian education ministries of Trinity Lutheran Church, Baton Rouge Lutheran School (BRLS) and the Trinity Lutheran Child Development Center (TLCDC), were untouched by the floodwaters and are continuing to share an Education Anchored In Christ. However, almost unbelievably, 47% (83) of our 175 school children have flooded homes. More than 50% (13) of our 25 school faculty and staff had water in their homes from a few inches up to 6-8 feet.

Many children have come to school telling stories of evacuation and loss. We spent this past Monday, August 22, our first day back in over a week, listening to the stories of the children, spending time with the Lutheran Church Charities Comfort Dogs, attempting to give the students a sense of normal routine, and allowing wearied parents a chance to go back to work or back to working on their flooded homes and going through all of the "red tape" required by insurance companies and FEMA. And, of course, we gathered together for worship and prayer.

Now many parents are concerned about how they are going to keep their children at BRLS and in TLCDC. Their money is now needed for other priorities such as food, shelter, transportation and other necessities. We would love to waive all school costs for these families, but the reality is we still need to pay our staff and our bills. Nonetheless we are determined to keep those children in BRLS and the TLCDC to whatever extent possible even though at this moment we do not have the financial resources to waive the partial or full costs of tuition, lunch, and childcare. We may even be able to enroll some children who have been affected by the flood who may need assistance.

If you, or your school and church, would like to partner with us, we would be grateful for any monetary donations that will allow us to keep all students at BRLS while their families try to put their lives back together. All donations will provide financial assistance for students' tuition, lunch, childcare, school supplies, and uniforms as well as providing gift cards to help families purchase food and other necessities. Donations can be sent to BRLS and TLCDC located at 10925 Florida Blvd. Baton Rouge, LA 70815. Our website is www.brlutheranschool.org

We especially covet your prayers for our students and their families, as well as our staff as we continue to share the love of Jesus daily both on our campus and in the community. Please pray for everyone in the flooded communities who is struggling physically and spiritually as they face current and future obstacles.

A personal perspective from Gordon and Kathy Schamber...

The rain began on Thursday morning, August 11 and the rain kept circling over our city and kept coming down. Just one day earlier Baton Rouge Lutheran School (BRLS) had opened its doors to 175 students (preschool through grade eight). Early Friday morning, August 12, the public schools announced they would not open due to the heavy rain and flooded streets. BRLS also cancelled classes. By Saturday morning our personal rain gauge had recorded 15 inches; less than many other areas. The river levels were going to fill to unprecedented levels; some as many as 20 feet above flood stage.

The rain stopped on Saturday. About midafternoon we noticed the streets in our subdivision were starting to fill with water. At the time we didn't realize it, but the creeks, streams, washes, and gullies that carried water out of the city towards the rivers were becoming conduits that carried backflow water into the cities from where it had come. The rivers could no longer carry the water away and they were sending it back to where it had come from at a high rate of speed. Soon water was quickly overflowing into areas that had never seen floodwaters. Many homes that flooded were in the "500 year flood plain" and were not required to be covered by flood insurance.

As night fell we watched the water slowly creeping up our driveway and into our yard. We went to bed believing that the water would not reach our house. When we woke up at 4 a.m. on Sunday we realized that the water was quickly rising towards our house and was already pouring into houses just a short way up the street. At 6 a.m. we decided it was time to leave. Our son and his two girls, ages 6 and 8 had stayed overnight. Kathy, our son and I waded through water that at times was 3 feet or more deep and still rising. We each carried a small bag of clothing and nothing else. We hadn't had much time to move some items in our one story house into the attic. Our son carried one girl and I carried the other. Two blocks later we met a high water National Guard truck that took our neighbors, several dogs and a cat, and us to a dry area where busses were going to take us to a shelter. We were blessed that a friend was able to negotiate flooded and blocked roads and pick us up. Hundreds of people across the city had similar experiences. The water had gone into areas that had never flooded as far back as weather records were recorded. Many homeowners did not have flood insurance and homeowners insurance does not cover flooding.

When my son and I waded back to our home two days later we were relieved to find out that the floodwaters had only reached our home for a short time. Damage to our home was nothing compared to most of our neighbors who had anywhere from 3 inches of water up to 36 inches of water flow through their homes. Other areas of Baton Rouge and the surrounding communities had homes with 3 to 8 feet of water that had flowed into them destroying all contents and damaging the structure of the home. Sometimes you could only see rooftops. We moved all the furniture to two dry rooms, removed all the carpet and took sheetrock and insulation from two bedroom walls. Most repairs are complete and Kathy and I hope to be back in our home within two weeks; most people will not be back in their home for months, perhaps a year, if they go back at all.

Thankfully, the water receded within two to three days in most areas. A majority of the people could get to their houses, apartments and businesses by Wednesday morning, August 16. They found devastation as well as no electricity, high humidity, and standing water. Most people lost everything in their home and their vehicles were total losses. The smell was terrible. They were facing hot, difficult and time-consuming work that had to be done as soon as humanly possible. All carpet and wood flooring had to be thrown out. All furniture that was not real wood had to be thrown out. Even real wood furniture might not be able to be saved. All appliances had to be thrown out as well as clothing, cabinets, doors, and so much more. Anything that was "saved" had to be scrubbed clean and disinfected. Depending on how high the water was in the home, sheetrock had to be cut at either 4 feet or 8 feet and removed from EVERY wall. In some homes, ceilings needed to be removed. Any insulation in the walls had to be removed because it acts as a wick pulling water higher into the walls. It's not unusual to walk into homes

after the sheetrock was removed and see nothing but metal or wooden studs and no walls. You can see straight through the house from the front to the back. Sometimes you can see into the house because outside walls had to be removed. Now as we drive the streets they are lined with mountains of wet sheetrock and insulation as well as appliances, furniture, and lots and lots of memories. Those mountains may sit for a month or more waiting for the trucks that will haul them away.

After being “gutted” the house has to dry for anywhere from 2 to 4 weeks. Hopefully your electricity is turned on and you can run the air conditioning to remove humidity. Usually a dehumidifier is put in place and fans are scattered throughout the home. Once dry, any mold needs to be removed and a mold inhibitor has to be sprayed on every stud and other areas that might allow mold to grow. And mold grows quickly in this environment. Finally, the home can be put back together as long as you can find sheetrock, insulation, carpet, and wood flooring. Contractors are also at a premium.

Public schools in Baton Rouge will reopen after Labor Day. In the neighboring city of Denham Springs where 32 inches of rain fell in less than three days, 29 of their 32 public schools flooded. Lots of people with school age children are moving to Baton Rouge from Denham Springs, which will put a strain on the public school system in Baton Rouge. Many businesses are closed, but not all areas of the city flooded so people can still get gasoline, groceries, and much more. However, traffic is a nightmare. People are really tired!

Our church, Trinity Lutheran Church, is now headquarters for taking in volunteers from across the country who are helping “gut” houses to get them ready to dry out. Go to www.tlcbbr.org to see all the things that are taking place to help our congregation members, school and child development center families, staff families, and the families of the community. It also lists ways you can help and items that are needed.

It is estimated that the flood has damaged 100,000 homes or more. Many people have lost everything. Many are still living in shelters. Many are searching for housing and we are already hearing reports of apartments that rented for \$900 last month are now renting for \$1600. Homes that have been on the market for months are now getting their asking price; bidding wars are pushing up the purchase price well beyond the asking price. There may soon be a “housing” shortage.

Our school’s theme this year is one word: “Connected!” Ephesians 4: 15-16 tells us that we are connected to our heavenly Father by the love that Jesus has for us and therefore we are connected to one another and can share God’s love with others. Even though it will be a long time before the flooded communities get back to “normal,” people are thankful for the connections of people helping one another, praying for one another and providing for one another in our school, child development center, church, community and the country. Many of our school and childcare center families have a strong faith in God and are continuing to show that faith in their words and actions. Our families are taking it one day at a time, and with God’s promise of a perfect home in heaven that will never flood, Baton Rouge will heal and be strong once again.