

Hinds BSUers answer call for hurricane cleanup volunteers

BOURG, La. (The Baptist Paper) – Ten students gathered around the two men in bright yellow shirts just outside of Bethel Church in Bourg, Louisiana, listening as they were told about safety protocols, how the process was going to work, and why they were there.

The students were from the Baptist Student Union at Hinds Community College in Raymond, and they were in south Louisiana for a long weekend to serve with Southern Baptist Disaster Relief teams following the destruction of Hurricane Ida in late August.

Bethel Church had large amounts of water damage and the students were being instructed by two Disaster Relief veterans, one from California and one from Arizona.

“We want you to treat this like it’s your home,” said Rob Bline of California Southern Baptist Disaster Relief Ministries. “It’s not just a job, it’s not just wet drywall... it’s somebody’s home (of worship), and we need to treat it as such.”

Dave Turner of Arizona Southern Baptist Disaster Relief explained that losses of possessions and places of community are a large source of grief for homeowners and parishioners.

Before entering the church that had been flooded during Hurricane Ida, volunteers had to don protective gear to shield them from the mold and mildew within the structure.

“Losing something like this church can be like losing a family member, and you’re sharing the love of Jesus with your actions,” Turner said. Bline prayed over the group prior to starting the cleanup process, asking the Lord to “restore and

renew" the church so that it can continue to be "used for His glory."

"They always do great work. They want to come. They want to serve, and they just put their heart into it. They're awesome to work with."

Norma Turner, Arizona Southern Baptist Disaster Relief chaplain

From there, the students got to work. Turner's wife Norma, who serves as the team chaplain for this location, has worked with similar college groups through disaster relief in the past. "They always do great work," she said. "They want to come. They want to serve, and they just put their heart into it. They're awesome to work with."