

Miss. Baptists map response to Jackson water crisis

*By Hubert Yates
Correspondent*

Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief (MBDR) is coordinating with Metro Association and churches across the Jackson metropolitan area in responding to the Jackson water crisis.

Following on the heels of a flash flood event that affected the area on August 24-25 and a threat of flooding from the Pearl River on August 28-29, the City of Jackson now finds itself faced with a major pressure loss within the entire municipal water system.

In a statement issued Monday, August 29, the Mississippi Governor's Office joined the Mississippi State Department of Health in declaring a State of Emergency in the City of Jackson because of the failed water system. With the declaration, state resources are being brought in to assist with ensuring that the 155,000-plus residents of Jackson have access to potable and non-potable water.

The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is serving as the coordinating response agency for state and local governments and non-governmental organizations that are responding. MEMA is focused on a two-fold plan to provide for residents during the outage.

The first phase is to ensure access to both drinking and sanitary water through supplementing existing Jackson efforts at bottled water distribution and supplying tankers to assist with non-potable supplies at fire stations and other locations across the city.

The second phase is to identify needs, repairs, and manpower

that will enable the restarting of the city's water treatment facilities. There is presently no timetable for the resolution of this situation.

A Zoom teleconference with Metro Association leadership, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board staff, MBDR leadership, and pastors from Metro Association was held on the afternoon of August 30. An operational plan was shaped to support ministry to the most vulnerable residents of the city.

Leveraging existing relationships with community ministries, the participating Metro Association congregations will be focusing their attention on the elderly, infirm, homebound, and their own members who live in the city who may not have access to the distribution sites across the city due to age, transportation, or physical limitations.

Bottled water will be made available for delivery by church and community ministry volunteers. By supplementing the efforts of local and state governments, it is hoped that many of those who would "fall through the cracks" might be served and their needs provided for in these times.

MBDR is supporting Metro Association and their associated congregations who are engaged in this ministry to those affected by the water outages in Jackson.

At the current time, the situational need is for bulk, palletized bottled water: MBDR is seeking to obtain *only* bulk, palletized bottled water for use in the distribution system. Please do not conduct "water collection drives" as collection, transportation, storage, and distribution at this point are a time-, cost-, and manpower-intensive operation.

Please assist us by monetary contribution for bulk purchases, designated to MBDR-Jackson Water Crisis, online at Giving – Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (mbcb.org), or by mail at MBCB, P. O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Contributions allow us to purchase bulk delivery by tractor trailer load to

facilitate handling and speed delivery to the people who are most in need

Please pray for city and state leaders for wisdom and knowledge to quickly resolve the issues; prayers for those who are being affected that they will realize and know the fullness of the hope

of Jesus in troubling times; and prayers for the congregations/volunteers who are responding to meet the needs of others.

If you are a MBDR volunteer and or member of a Mississippi Baptist Convention congregation that desires to come alongside Metro Association and their congregations in their ministry to the residents of the City of Jackson during this crisis through volunteering or contributing to the effort, and/or need additional information, please contact MBDR at hyates@mbcb.org, or by telephone at (601) 292-3334.

Yates is director of disaster relief for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

"I'm thankful for the great leadership of Hubert Yates in coordinating the effort to make sure those who need clean water have access to it. The response of Metro Association churches along with others across the state has been great, as I would expect."

Shawn Parker, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

"FBC Byram and all of our Metro Baptist Association churches will be praying for the citizens of Jackson and our local and state leaders while simultaneously seeking ways to support and meet the needs of our community. We love Jackson and the metro area and will do all we can to be of help during this time of crisis."

*Statement by Brandon Powell, senior pastor of First Church,
Byram*