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Church reaches out to community

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Every Thursday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and again from 4 to 7 p.m., volunteers from the community and members of Richey Street Baptist Church distribute food and clothing to struggling residents at the church's location on 1010 Richey.

Since last Friday afternoon, that community service has been expanded to meet the needs of displaced tenants of the Compton Court apartment complex, part of which was damaged in a massive fire that displaced roughly 60 families.



Nelson Duron-Chavarria, Maria Chavarria and her daughter, Ashley, tenants of the Compton Court Apartment complex, lost most of their personal belongings in Friday's fire that displaced roughly 60 families.

The U-haul truck picking up a load from the Houston Food Bank has stalled that morning, but members were already responding to the task at hand.

The church has been working with the apartment management in getting the word out to tenants and, so far, about 19 families have stopped by with the church expecting that number to increase.

Maria Chavarria and her family lost most of their belongings in the fire and on Tuesday morning, apartment managers directed her to the church.

"We were at work when the fire broke out and when we came home, everything was gone," she said.

Chavarria is the mother of a baby girl and a first-grader at Kruse Elementary School, who was in school by Monday morning in regular clothes.

The apartment fire affected students from Kruse, De Zavala Fifth Grade Center, Jackson Intermediate and Pasadena High School. Uniforms and tennis shoes are an urgent need.

The donations have been coming in non-stop since Friday, but the church has become overloaded on food and most clothing items.

"We have the food and the clothing, but we need pots, pans, dishes, things of that nature," said Theresa Soto, a church member who helps every Thursday at the food pantry.

Those receiving donations, said Soto, must sign in and display identification and according to family size, are given a box of groceries and clothing items.

Rita Hill is the food pantry coordinator every Thursday and like Soto, has been impressed with the level of compassion in the community.

“People have been driving up and bringing things,” she said.

Pastor Michael Thomas was on hand late Friday afternoon after the fire as apartment tenants scattered to retrieve scorched belongings.

“The whole community is ministering,” he said. “It’s coming from south Pasadena and north Pasadena, but there is no north or south Pasadena — it’s just Pasadena and everyone is coming together.”

As Margaret Norwood was unloading boxes of donations from the back of a truck, her five-year old granddaughter Brianna played with one-year old Ashley Chavarria.

“This is what ministry is about,” she said.

Now living with her brother in another apartment unit at Compton Court, Chavarria lost everything she owned in the fire, but remained thankful.

“I’m just grateful to God that it didn’t happen at night because we might have lost our lives,” she said.

The food pantry and clothing donations for the victims of last Friday’s fire will serve Monday-Friday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 4 to 7 p.m. through April 26.

For more information on how to contribute, call 713-472-4378.