

IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Oct. 14<sup>th</sup>, 2005

CONTACT: Chip Rumis 619-804-0748  
Karl Higgins 760-727-5227

## **HURRICANE BATTERED CHURCHES BEING REBUILT BY LOCAL TEAM**

Chip Rumis keeps fast company. The Ramona resident's favorite hobby is racing his hot rods and dragsters in the National Hot Rod Association, at speeds approaching 200 mph. He belongs to a faith based group of drag racers called "Racers for Christ" who pray for each others safety before each race and study the bible together.

That speed work is evident in a new commitment Rumis, and his wife Jean, have to rebuilding damaged churches in Mississippi from Hurricane Katrina. The couple is deeply committed to their faith and was hungry to do more than simply write a check to a relief agency as they watched television reports of the hurricane battering the Gulf Coast on August 30<sup>th</sup>.

Rumis wondered out loud to his wife about who would rebuild the damaged churches in the storm area. Before long, a plan began to form in his head. The answer to his question was, "We will." His reasoning was if the storm had destroyed houses of worship, livelihoods and homes, then residents were likely desperate in their search for solace. Houses of worship were needed to feed their faith. Rumis and his wife felt a new mission in their life but were unsure how to proceed.



"I called good friend of mine Karl Higgins on the Thursday before Labor Day who has been to the tsunami region with North Coast Church in Vista assisting victims in Indonesia. I explained the frustration I felt at seeing how desperate the situation appeared for the residents of the Gulf area," said Rumis. "I wanted to do more. I wanted to know how I could help."

Twenty four hours later, Rumis and his Vista friend, Karl Higgins, were on a plane to Jackson, MS. They had a suitcase full of Power Bars, a case of bottled water and some beef jerky.

What they lacked were hotel reservations, a rental car and any contacts with relief agencies in the Gulf. Power was out in the area and telephones were down. Making reservations online was not working either since the hotel and rental car companies themselves could not reach their outlets. News reports indicated there was little gasoline, some price gouging and long lines, with prices approaching five and six dollars per gallon.

Within an hour of landing the two had a brand new rental car with half a tank of gas and two hotel rooms. "We had God on our road trip," said Rumis. "It was meant to be."

By the end of the next day, Saturday, the two had made contacts with multiple relief agencies including a county sheriff's department chaplain in Hattiesburg, MS, Pastor Bobby Shurden. The pastor was incredulous that two Californians had appeared out of the blue and offered to help rebuild churches with a plan to bring materials and labor. Shurden helped them identify, visit and photograph multiple storm damaged churches in the area.

"Hattiesburg and the surrounding area looked like a war zone," said Rumis. "The damage was so overwhelming that before long Karl and I just drove in silence, staring at the incredible destruction. The people we spoke to were devastated, physically and emotionally. I knew we had to come back and help."



Returning home, Rumis contacted his group bible study leader, Pastor Ken Owen of the John 8:31 ministry in Rancho Bernardo. He showed Owen the pictures and relayed his visit to the area while explaining his idea of having one church adopt another church and sponsor the repairs. Upon completion, the repaired church would adopt another damaged church and assist in its rebuilding. "It's the whole 'pay it forward' concept," said Rumis. He and his wife would raise funds and contribute seed money themselves to jump start the operation. Owen embraced the idea immediately and Adopt-a-Church was born.

The speed and determination Rumis generated in his drag racing hobby was put to work creating a new organization from scratch that would fund and rebuild the damaged churches he had seen.

Forty three days after Hurricane Katrina battered the Gulf Coast, Rumis and his wife had moved temporarily to Mississippi living in their motorhome, raised close to \$50,000 in cash and material donations and began repairing their first church—Trinity Baptist in Petal, MS.



They have chronicled their efforts at the ministry's website, [www.adoptachurch.com](http://www.adoptachurch.com), writing weekly letters that describe their mission and the work done to date.

“Many, many people, companies and donors answered our call in God’s name for assistance,” said Rumis. “Jean and I will be here for the next several months organizing work crews, raising funds and coordinating the rebuilding. There is a very large team behind us in the greater San Diego area praying for our success and helping us. We could not successfully be here, doing the Lord’s work, without our support team. When we finished reroofing the first church, we were hot, tired and filthy dirty, but I have never been happier in my life.”

Additional contacts:

- ?? Pastor Bobby Shurden, Forrest County Sheriff’s Department Chaplin and pastor of Crestview Baptist Church, Petal, MS
- ?? Pastor Jimmy Garrard, Trinity Baptist Church, Petal Police Department Chaplin Petal, MS 601-584-7432
- ?? Pastor Ken Owen, John 8:31 Ministry, Rancho Bernardo, CA 858-451-1583