

Texas church hit by deadly twister

Reporters expected to see people saddened by the loss of their church after a tornado blasted Calvary Cathedral in downtown Fort Worth, Texas, in April. Instead, it seemed like the 2,000-strong crowd had just won the lottery.

"People were just praising God and rejoicing," pastor Bob Nichols said of his church's "celebration," which was held at the Roundup Inn in the Will Rogers Memorial Center after the disaster. The cathedral had been left inoperable by the storm.

The first deadly twister in the city's 150-year history smashed Calvary's "power tower"—a venue for around-the-clock prayer meetings. Yet Nichols was upbeat, saying God would bring something good out of the disaster.

"What really matters is still here," he told Charisma. "People are the church. The building is not the people. We'll come out of this stronger, wiser and better—with more power than we've had before."

Nichols and his wife, Joy, were in Calvary Cathedral when the storm hit. "We felt led to move out of my office," he explained. "Three minutes later, the tornado struck in all its fury."

A security guard pushed the couple to the floor. "When we

looked at my office two minutes later, the tornado exploded all the windows. If we'd been in that room, God only knows what would've happened."

Such stories of deliverance abound at the church. There were 100 people in the complex, yet no one was killed, and only two needed medical treatment. Across the town, four died, and 100 were injured. Fort Worth Mayor Kenneth Barr said it was a "miracle" that there weren't more casualties.

Church elder George Montgomery was in a restaurant when he saw debris being sucked into the storm. He left the disaster scene with just a few minor nicks and scratches from flying glass. "God protected us miraculously," he said.

Tiffany Estabrook, a cell-group leader at Calvary Chapel, took shelter in her car as softball-sized hail dropped from the sky. She said the crisis has had a spiritual impact on her work colleagues and is "really going to cause people to take inventory." —Clive Price in Fort Worth, Texas