

Please Pray for the Families of These Pentecostal Children Killed in Fiery Wreck

They were on their way to Disney World when the unthinkable happened. Five children and seven adults died in a fiery car crash that made international headlines: Cierra Bordelan, 9; Joel Cloud, 14; Brieanne Descant, 10; Cara Descant, 13 and Jeremiah Warren, 14.

Two more people, 59-year old Steve Holland, who was driving the northbound truck, and 49-year-old Douglas Bolkema, who was driving the southbound truck, also died in the crash along Interstate 75 in Alachua County, Florida.

"I cried so much this morning that my tears felt like lava running out a volcano," said Pastor Eric Descant, whose granddaughter died in the crash. Descant pastors Avoyelles House of Mercy in Marksville, Louisiana, where the children attended.

The United Pentecostal Church International released a statement from Louisiana District Superintendent Kevin Cox offering more information about the victims:

January 3, 2019, a van load of people from our UPC in Marksville, Louisiana, (Pastor Eric Descant) were on their way to Orlando, Florida. For some unknown reason, a large tractor-trailer truck crossed the median of I-75 near Gainesville, Florida, and crashed into the church van. Sister Karen Descant, the pastor's wife, and two other adult ladies were on board the van. In addition, nine children were on the van. Sadly, five of those children did not survive the accident. Pastor Descant was not with them, but is at the hospital there in Gainesville with those who survived. One of the five children who died in the accident, was the

granddaughter of Pastor Descant.

Sister Karen Descant has seven broken ribs, a broken collarbone, multiple bruises, cuts, etc. Pastor Descant's words were, "She is pretty banged up. One of the ladies was pregnant, but we are told the baby is going to be all right. She too is pretty "banged up." The other lady is not as severely injured, but is still in the hospital. The four children all have injuries, but the medical staff feel that all of them will heal and recover."

It is possible that many of you have already been made aware of the accident because it made national news. But, you may not have heard that it was our own people who were involved. Pastor Jimmy Toney and his wife have been with our people almost the entire time since they were transported to the hospital. They and their church have been exceedingly kind in this horrific tragedy.

Please pray for the healing of those physical injuries. And, perhaps even more so, pray for the church and families that have been so massively affected by this tragedy.

The multi-vehicle crash involved two tractor-trailers, the church van and another sedan. The crash sparked a massive fire after 50 gallons of diesel gushed onto the highway, according to *USA Today*.

Spectrum My News 13 reports one of the semitrucks and a passenger vehicle collided in the northbound lanes. After that collision, both of those vehicles traveled through the guardrail, crossed over the median and into southbound I-75. The van overturned and ejected some of the passengers.

The surviving victims, including a pregnant woman, were in serious or critical condition, according to Florida Highway Patrol.

"My heart just broke," said Richard Newman, with New Life Assembly of God. "The community, we need to come together. We need to be praying and supporting this church and families and the multiple families that are touched and devastated with this."

More than 300 people attended a "Night of Healing" at The Pentecostals of Gainesville on Sunday.

"Your presence tonight is just another way of you showing support," Pastor Jimmy Toney told the crowd.

Toney and his church jumped into action as soon as they heard about the crash.

"Our church is doing whatever we can to offer meals, offer houses, to pay for hotels, whatever we have to do to help with travel expense (and) back and forth," Toney said.

He continued, "These are some of the most resilient people that I have ever met, they have a great faith base."

The Pentecostals of Gainesville set up a fundraiser online for the victims' families.

The Louisiana District United Pentecostal Church also set up a fund for monetary donations for the Marksville church and families affected by the tragic accident. Donations and contributions can be made online or by mail to P. O. Box 248, Tioga, LA 71477.