

Christian Musicians Aid Nashville Church Devastated by Flood

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✖ Contemporary Christian artists are hoping to help a Nashville, Tenn., church rebuild after massive flooding in early May destroyed its building.

On Tuesday night, singer-songwriter Brandon Heath and songwriter-producer Jason Ingram will lead the Love Your Neighbor benefit concert to restore 5-year-old El Shaddai Christian Church. The Spirit-filled Hispanic congregation's south Nashville facility was devastated when 6 feet of water rushed inside the church, forcing pastor German Castro to be rescued by boat.

Photo: El Shaddai Christian Church

"I thought, Wow, five years' work, two hours, gone," Castro told Nashville's WSMV 4 News.

A few days after the flash flooding he began to see that "there is hope; there is new life coming," he said. "Something that the waters didn't take away was our faith and our love for Jesus Christ."

An offering will be collected during the free concert, to be held at 7 p.m. at Fellowship Bible Church in Brentwood, Tenn. Christian artists tobyMac, Mike Donehey of Tenth Avenue North and Britt Nicole also are scheduled to perform.

"There are so many ways that we can respond to this disaster, but my friends and I choose to react with hope," Heath said.

"We encourage others to see this time of rebuilding as a great opportunity to care for others."

Parts of Music City were under as much as 10 inches of water after torrential rains fell May 1-2, causing the Harpeth River to rise 5 feet above flood stage and the Cumberland River to crest at 52 feet-the highest it had been since 1937.

Floodwaters rushed into Nashville streets, leaving 20 people dead and forcing thousands to flee their homes. Nashville Mayor Karl Dean estimated that there was more than \$1.5 billion in damage.

Since the flooding, Christian musicians have reached out to Nashville, where several major Christian labels are based. Gospel artist CeCe Winans participated in Sunday's "Music City Keep on Playin'" benefit concert and telethon, which raised more than \$1.7 million for flood relief. The event also featured country music stars such as Brad Paisley, Keith Urban and Martina McBride and aired live on the Great American Country television network.

Amy Grant and *American Idol* alum Melinda Doolittle were among the musicians who participated in the "Working 4 You: Flood Relief With Vince Gill and Friends" telethon May 6, which raised \$1.7 million for organizations such as the Second Harvest Food Bank, the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army.

Since the floods, churches and Christian humanitarian aid groups have been leading cleanup efforts. Days after the flooding, Operation Blessing International and Samaritan's Purse began providing meals and water for displaced residents, and helping with cleanup.

On Saturday, Heath joined members of Cross Point Church and staff from the WAY-FM Christian radio station for a day of work in Nashville's hard-hit Bellevue community.

The Love Your Neighbor concert series has helped raise thousands of dollars since it launched. In 2008, the event raised \$20,000 for Nashville area tornado victims. Last year, it generated enough donations to cover the total cost of a critical eye surgery to prevent blindness of a local high school student, who had recently lost his father and health insurance coverage.