

West's recovery steady but painful

November 14, 2013

WEST (ABP)—At times, citizens of West glimpse the light at the end of the tunnel in their recovery from the April explosion that cratered their Central Texas town and altered their lives.

Slowly, homes are being repaired and rebuilt. Neighbors are coming back together through acts of kindness—large and small.

Recently, Texas boot maker [Justin](#) donated 548 pairs of boots to the West Volunteer Fire Department, which in turn gave 300 remaining pairs to [First Baptist Church](#).



John Crowder
Pastor John Crowder put a simple note on Facebook offering the boots to any West resident who needed them.

“And the thing went viral,” Crowder said. “We had 64 direct shares ... and over 6,000 views.”

It didn't stop there, though.

“I got phone calls and emails, and people were hitting me up on Facebook and Twitter, ... and in about two hours, we were out.”

Two hours to give away 300 pairs of boots, he said, shows just how much need remains in the town where [the fertilizer plant explosion](#) killed 15, including a dozen firefighters, and injured hundreds more.

The blast left scores of homes destroyed or damaged so badly they were uninhabitable.

Crowder, whose church has been the hub of recovery efforts, estimates it will take \$35 million to get everyone back home. So far, less than \$4 million has been collected.

“That makes it very difficult, because we can’t give everybody what they need,” he said.

West wouldn’t even be that far without help from others, he said.

Loving West

In June, the Baptist General Convention of Texas coordinated “Loving West,” a weeklong volunteer effort aimed at clearing debris and taking on other tasks to make rebuilding possible. About 650 members of churches from around the state participated.

Recently, [Habitat for Humanity](#) committed to build three homes in West, while the Mennonite group [Christian Aid Ministries](#) plans 15.

And there are others, but the pressing need continues to be money, which can be donated to [West Long-Term Recovery](#) or to [First Baptist Church](#), Crowder said.

“We are going through a very difficult time emotionally, and experts have told us this is the natural course,” he said. “That includes a time of anger and depression, and we’re just about to come out of that.”

Christians should continue to pray for the city, Crowder added.

“Early on, I told how I wasn’t sleeping and eating and I was exhausted every day, yet I had the strength to continue,” he added. “I think that’s because folks were praying for us.”